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22 August 2002
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PRIVATE EYE

SUMMER HOLIDAY SPECIAL

Cumbria is so wonderful...

...that we are going to France tomorrow

Gnome

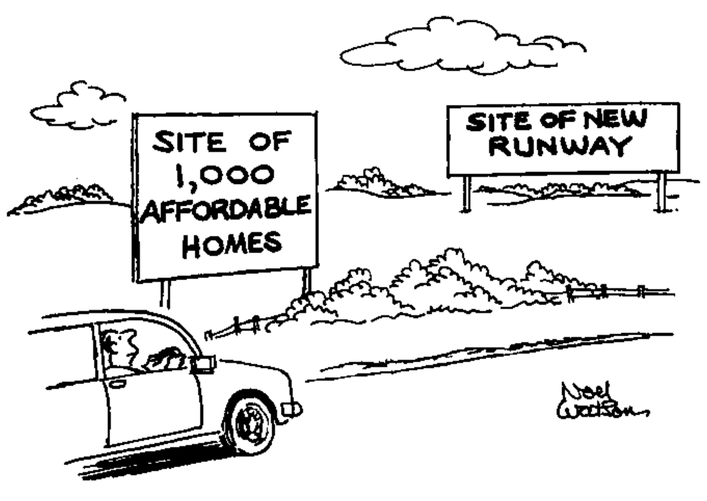
REPORTS in some of the less trustworthy papers have suggested that the Gnomeson Media Group is in financial difficulties. Needless to say, these reports are totally unfounded.

An accurate account of the situation in this highly successful company, of which I am privileged to be the Chairman, can be found in the respected newspaper *The Financial Gnomes* (coincidentally owned by the Gnomeson Group). In an exclusive interview to the Pink 'Un (now known as the IntheRed 'Un) the Chief Executive of Gnomeson, the brilliant Rita Chevrolino (36-22-36), announced record profits of –£27 billion.

As top city accountants Arthur Andergnomes make clear in their annual audit of the company, and I quote, "What appears to be a loss on paper is actually a profit, if you turn the graph upside down." *(Surely 'incorporate operating costs as one-off, exceptional capital expenditure over the relevant period'? Ed.)*

Lord Gnome
The Financial Gnomes
The Gnomeson Group
Carey Street.

Remember our motto: *"It's all gone Pearson-shaped!"*



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ABC

Keeping dry...

- *Diana memorial, Archer and the asteroids 4, 5*
- *Alan Duncan's incredibly oily past 6*
- *Going private: Ministers queue for jobs 7*
- *Railtrack and the Enron effect 13*
- *Crapita's criminal records 28*
- *Slicker on fraud from Houston to Brussels 29, 30*

VICTIMISATION

IN THE high court last week Mr Justice Eady awarded former nursery nurses Dawn Reed and Christopher Lillie £200,000 each in libel damages against a Newcastle city council social services review team which had falsely accused them of child abuse, after they had already been acquitted in a criminal court.

The council's action had lacked, said the judge, "both fairness and humanity". He went out of his way to emphasise that Reed and Lillie were completely innocent. This is not the first time Newcastle has destroyed an employee's career by surrendering to a lynch-mob mentality.

In *Eye* 1056 we told how Paul Gillon, a Newcastle careworker who was put on the sex offenders' register, lost his job and suffered a nervous breakdown that brought him to the brink of suicide as a result of a 20-second telephone conversation with a partially deaf and emotionally vulnerable foster child. The girl told her foster parents she thought he had made an obscene suggestion to her. Gillon was sacked without being allowed to defend himself at a disciplinary hearing. It took him four years to be vindicated, when an industrial tribunal condemned the council and awarded him the maximum £20,000 for unfair dismissal and discrimination. For Reed and Lillie it took nine years.

EDUCASHUN

THE *Eye* wishes to apologise for singling out the pisspoor exam board Edexcel for criticism. AQA, the Assessment and Qualification Alliance, is equally capable of cocking things up.

One GCSE examiner told us how, having declined to act as an English examiner for AQA this year, she received her first pack of stationery and correspondence in May. After repeated phone calls she was eventually reassured that no exam papers would be sent to her for marking. The first papers arrived the day after the English exam.

The woman phoned the board and was assured someone would ring back. Nobody did. Then more scripts arrived. She rang again and was assured action would be taken. None was.

In all 190 papers arrived – which would normally take a marker about 100 hours. Two weeks into the three-week marking period, her phone calls to AQA eventually paid off and she was sent envelopes in which to forward the work. She told the *Eye*: "Those scripts will have got to the board after the end of the allocated marking period. Whoever marks them will not have the time to do justice to the candidates' work.

"English is a crucial GCSE, required for progression into higher education and almost all employment and it takes time to mark a paper accurately. Those candidates would get a more accurate assessment of their work if a number were taken out of a hat."

PS: An AQA insider suggests it has so many GCSE English papers – nearly half the country's output for the year – that it can't mark them all anyway and grades may be given based on coursework.

PRIVATISATION

THE national audit office (NAO) report slamming the privatisation of the air traffic control system (NATS) has been widely reported, but its view of those who advised the government on the deal has had less coverage.

An army of advisers brought their so-called expertise to the sell-off and were paid handsomely. Despite an initial estimate of £17,165,000, the government actually forked out £43,961,000 on bankers, lawyers and accountants, all of whom said that a deal which has left air traffic control in a pisspoor state and severe financial difficulty was a terribly good idea.

Perhaps bankers Credit Suisse First Boston, lawyers Slaughter & May, accountants Deloitte & Touche and advisers like HSBC and Lovell's were too busy counting their own fees to notice that the NATS public-private partnership might leave air traffic control in a deep financial hole.

CSFB – whose bill soared from an estimated £4.7m to £8.9m – bears particular responsibility. It was lead adviser and supposed to determine the "feasibility and structure" of the PPP. It turns out that private air traffic control is barely feasible and the structure awful.

Amazingly, CSFB has another job acting as the government's financial adviser on the introduction of a PPP for BNFL. So the complete bankers who made such a mess of air traffic control can now do the same for Britain's ailing nuclear industry.

THE THINGS THEY SAY

Swanwick "is set to give Britain the most advanced air traffic control system in the world."

— NATS chief executive William Semple, commenting on the "global success story" in the Guardian, *June 1999.*

"We at National Air Traffic Services firmly believe that proceeding with the PPP is in the best interests of the airlines and all who fly with them."

— Letter to the FT *from Sir Roy McNulty, chairman of NATS, July 1999.*

"There is a very real risk to safety."

— Leaked letter from air traffic controllers to the government, August 2002.

Street of Shame

THE choice of a suitable memorial for Princess Diana was beset by squabbles and hypocrisy – not least in the offices of the newspapers covering the debacle. The *Daily Mirror*, following its humbug over *Big Brother* (see last *Eye*), was particularly duplicitous.

Its "senior staff writer" Charlie Bain had written an extraordinary arslikhan letter to the offices of landscape artist Kathryn Gustafson and her design team some weeks before her fountain design was chosen as winner.

Bain told the artist the *Mirror* had lobbied for many months for a memorial. "Tony Blair personally gave the go-ahead for the project. It was privately made known to us that the decision was a direct result of the *Daily Mirror* campaign." He continued: "We've seen Anish Kapoor's design [the rival design to Gustafson's] and we are desperate to back yours. Being the second bigggest newspaper in the country we have huge sway... We are determined to make this work and hope you will come round to believing in us."

Despite his grovelling sycophancy the design was not handed over. Shortly afterwards, though, Gustafson's design was announced as winner. Although she hadn't exclusively helped the *Mirror* by giving them her design, surely her admirers there would still be fulsome in their praise? Er, no. A news story on the day described it as a "controversial water memorial... sure to provoke criticism because there is no fountain or any discernible landmark except an understated 'moat'."

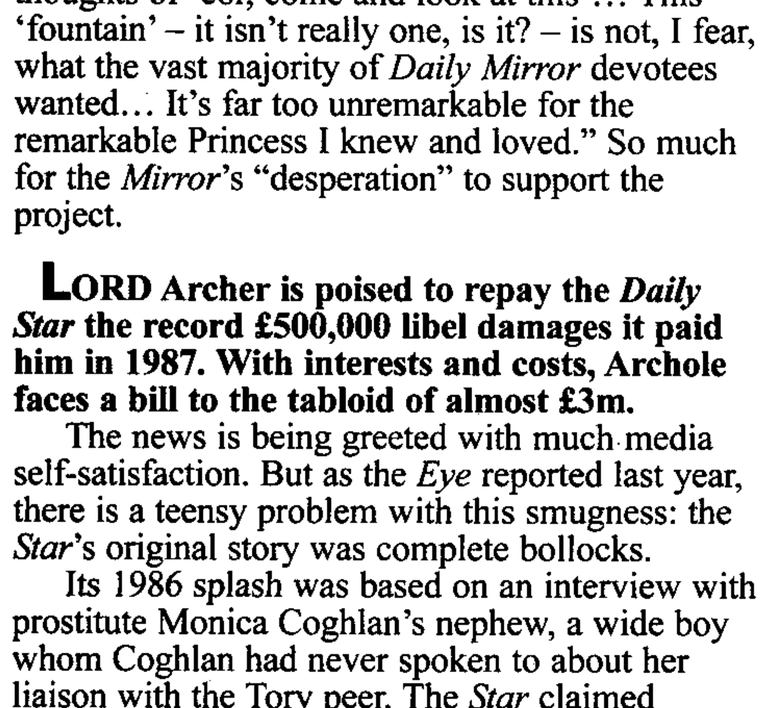
The *Mirror*'s royal commentator James Whittaker continued the hatchet job, deriding the memorial for missing "any sense of drama, any thoughts of 'cor, come and look at this'... This 'fountain' – it isn't really one, is it? – is not, I fear, what the vast majority of *Daily Mirror* devotees wanted... It's far too unremarkable for the remarkable Princess I knew and loved." So much for the *Mirror*'s "desperation" to support the project.

LORD Archer is poised to repay the *Daily Star* the record £500,000 libel damages it paid him in 1987. With interests and costs, Archole faces a bill to the tabloid of almost £3m.

The news is being greeted with much media self-satisfaction. But as the *Eye* reported last year, there is a teensy problem with this smugness: the *Star*'s original story was complete bollocks.

Its 1986 splash was based on an interview with prostitute Monica Coghlan's nephew, a wide boy whom Coghlan had never spoken to about her liaison with the Tory peer. The *Star* claimed Archer was a regular client who had "kinky sex" with Coghlan. The woman herself was adamant she had only met Archer once.

In the witness stand Coghlan gave her opinion of the *Star* story: "The only true part is that I went to bed with Jeffrey Archer. The rest of it is sheer fantasy," she said. Such an elaborate fiction might be worthy of an Archer novel... but is it worth a pay-out of almost £3m to the *Star* and its attractive new proprietor, the pornographer Dirty Des?

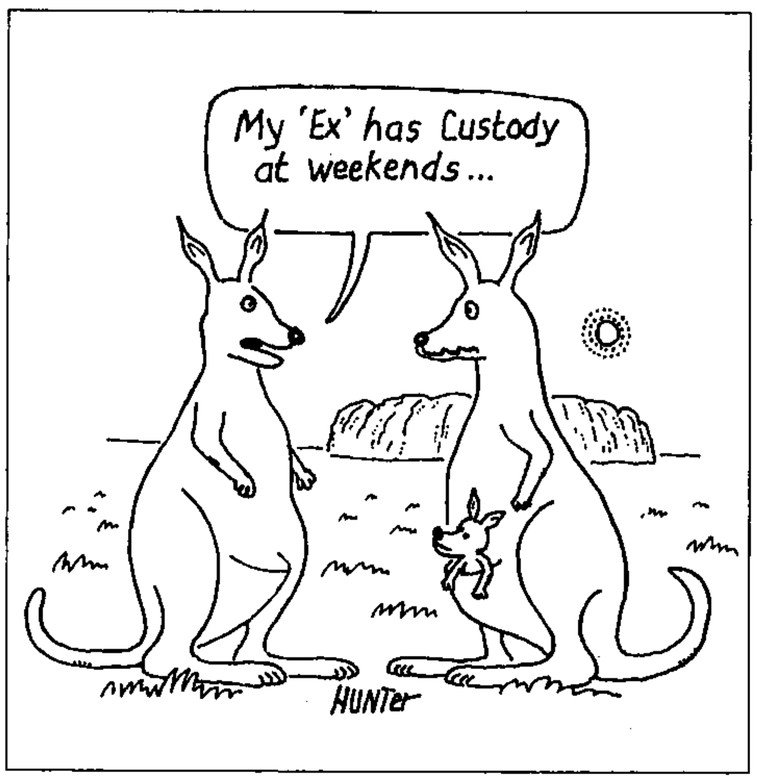


Gulf Daily News, Bahrain

AN INQUIRY is under way at North Sea Camp prison in Lincolnshire to uncover the mole who is supplementing his £16 a week prison wages selling stories about Archer to the press. Inmates, meanwhile, are having a more heated debate: how is Archole consistently winning perks denied to other inmates?

The disgraced peer has been allowed outside visits two weekends on the trot, first visiting Skegness and then going home to the Old Vicarage in Granchester for a visit to his fragrant wife Mary. Other prisoners are furious since they are only allowed one trip outside a fortnight and their trips are restricted to within 50 miles of the remote prison.

The sick of Skegness can't wait though to find out which doctor's surgery will be gaining Archer as an employee under the prison's working out scheme – another cushy position guaranteed to make fellow inmates even more resentful.



***SPECTATOR* subscribers recently received an offer to buy a discount copy of Sheridan Morley's *Spectator at the Theatre*, a collection of Morley's reviews for the political weekly.**

The puff reminded them that Sherry was an award-winning journalist who had been drama critic of *The Spectator* for 10 years and had written numerous theatrical biographies. But if Morley was so revered, readers might have wondered, why was he no longer the magazine's theatre critic?

Answer was there none. But this may have been because Sherry was forced to walk the plank last year to make way for editor Boris Johnson's university chum, Toby Young.

Illustrating the gulf in knowledge between critics past and present, that very issue contained a letter from Morley upbraiding his successor for mis-informing readers on a point of theatrical trivia. Determined to have the last word, Young then used a column in the *Observer* to attack "established columnists [who] don't take too kindly to being replaced by whipper-snappers." Rounding on Morley's pedantry, he promised: "The next time I spot the old duffer dozing in the stalls... I'm going to whip out a pair of scissors and cut off his long, white beard." As they say in the theatre, this one could run and run.

HAS the editor of the London *Evening Standard* Veronica Wadley read something unpleasant in the stars? That might explain why she suddenly sacked the paper's astrologer of three year's standing, Sarah Bartlett. No other explanation has been given for Wadley's axe falling on the hapless star-gazer.

Rather than telling Bartlett the bad news to her face, Wadley terminated her contract curtly by letter. Though Bartlett is an astrologer, it still came as a nasty surprise to the writer who has seen income from the paper's astrology phonelines rise since she took over and has never received a complaint about her work from *Standard* management.

Insiders believe Bartlett is to be replaced by Shelley von Strunckel, the *Sunday Times*' astrologer.

***DAILY Telegraph* political correspondent Michael Kallenbach often wines and dines high-ranking Tories on behalf of his paper. So he was surprised when one expense claim for dinner with Tory defence spokesman Bernard Jenkin was returned to him with a grumpy note from the *Torygraph* accounts department.**

It was happy to pay for food and wine but wouldn't pay for a packet of cigarettes included on the bill. Kallenbach was mystified since he doesn't smoke; but discreet inquiries revealed the guilty party. It was the top Tory himself who had ordered the fags before Kallenbach arrived.

THE reddest face in the Street of Shame last week belonged to *Daily Telegraph* reporter Nigel Bunyan, whose byline appeared over the bizarre tale of Brian Comer, 39, a runner in a school sports day's fathers' race who, up against a strong field which included Robbie Fowler, the Leeds and England footballer, had carried on running past the finishing line, hit a brick wall and broken his arms.

Comer, the *Telegraph* reported on 23 July, was suing the school for negligence claiming the track shouldn't have been so near a wall. The story was all true; the only catch being that, er, the incident took place in 1994 and Comer's claim was thrown out by the high court as recently as 1997 – a fact reported by all newspapers at the time.

The *Telegraph* bashfully printed a correction the following day, 24 July, after receiving an email from the judge in the 1997 case along the lines of "I know the wheels of justice grind slowly, but..." This was too late, however, to prevent Paul Howlett penning a piece on the awfulness of over-competitive dads, pegged to Bunyan's report, for the *Grauniad*, whose weekend round-up section *The Editor* then repeated the original, five-year-old tale as one of its stories of the week on Saturday 27 July.

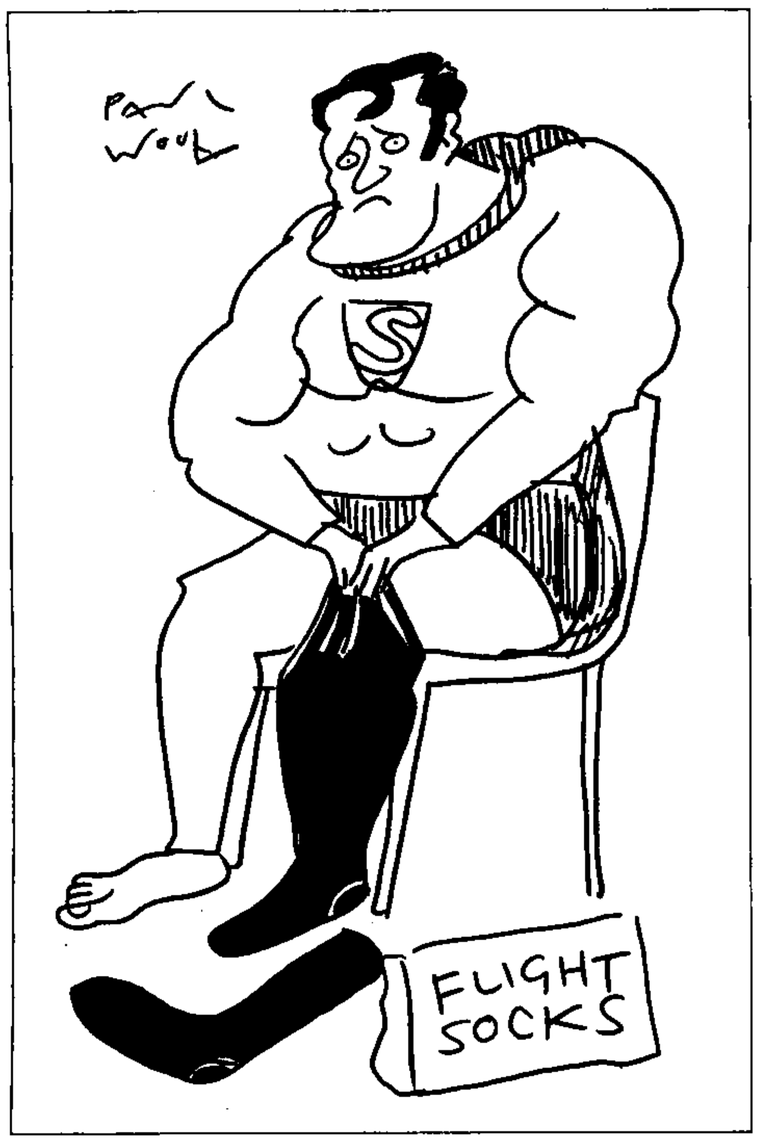
PS: The story got into the *Telegraph* because it had remained on Bunyan's laptop since he first wrote it in 1997 and had a similar catchline to a new story he had written. Bunyan sent it in error and no one noticed.

THE last *Eye*'s Hackwatch about *Daily Mirror* anti-*Big Brother* correspondent Kevin O'Sullivan brought back bad memories for the owners of the New York News Service.

When O'Sullivan was freelancing in Los Angeles in the mid-90s, he ran up a $2,000 bill with the research service. Calls for payment drew a plea of poverty from O'Sullivan, who claimed he had not been paid for the story by the *Mirror*. "Sue the fucking *Mirror*," he kindly suggested when cornered by the firm's indignant owner.

Bills to O'Sullivan and his business partner and girlfriend Henrietta Knight were returned unopened. Phone calls were equally unsuccessful since the pair would deny it was them answering the phone. Years later the bill remains unpaid, but Kevin O'Sullivan, now showbusiness editor of the "fucking *Mirror*", no longer need worry about such trivial matters.

"Hi, I'm bored, can you come in and mess up the jumpers?"



THE Marsh Wall area of Docklands – scene of the 1996 South Quay bomb – was the centre of a massive security operation last Saturday when armed police surrounded the *Independent*, stopping cars and preventing hacks entering or leaving the building.

At the centre of the drama was a small, heavy, oddly-shaped package, bound with masking tape. It had arrived in the post for *Sindie* environment editor Geoffrey "the Voice of Doom" Lean, who was away on holiday.

Foreign desk man Ray Whitaker – a veteran of Bosnia, Kosovo and Afghanistan – declared the package "suspicious". Knacker was alerted and the postroom sealed off. Everyone was told to stay away from the windows. The bomb squad gingerly opened the parcel and found... a potato.

UNDER THE MICROSCOPE

FOR four years now the media has had a new scare story with which to put us off our breakfast: the asteroid on collision course with planet earth. The latest is a mile-and-a-quarter lump of rock called 2002 NT7; and on 24 July the nation's media screamed that at 11.47am on 1 February 2019 it would hit the earth, destroying Life As We Know It.

The press rose hysterically to the occasion with gruesome descriptions of shockwaves and blasts equivalent to "millions of atom bombs". The *Daily Telegraph* gave a chilling account of how the space rock would hit the earth at 18 miles a second. This would be "enough to wipe out a continent" and throw up enough dust to block out the sun and cause global famine, chaos and general wailing and gnashing of teeth.

To be fair the *Telegraph* littered its account with enough "coulds", "possiblys" and "maybes" to make it clear this was the classic summer science flyer – the armageddon-that-isn't. But less cautious was the *Express*. Its dwindling band of readers were left in no doubt: "the world ends" on collision day, the hysterical headline said.

So is it really time to forget paying into our pensions and live life for the moment? Er, no. Although the headlines trumpeted that earth was doomed, when you actually read the copy it was clear that it wasn't. The asteroid had only been observed for a few weeks. Scientists only know its orbit to the most approximate degree. "The error in our knowledge of where NT7 will be on 1 Feb 2019 is large, several tens of millions of kilometres," said NASA's Dr Donald Yeomans. The odds, where odds were quoted were as 60,000-75,000 to one that the asteroid would hit – and they lengthened by the day.

Then, less than a week later, NASA announced that NT7 would definitely miss the earth in 2019. But picking up the next day's papers one could have been forgiven for thinking the end was still nigh. Save for a couple of tiny stories buried at the bottom of the page, "Humanity not doomed after all" – quite a good story on the face of it – received not a mention.

Commendably, the human race has started looking out for disreputable pieces of space debris. But the fact is that major asteroid strikes are vanishingly rare. Something as big as NT7 hits earth every three million years or so. It is improbable that just four or five years after we start looking for such a monster, we will find one due to hit in our lifetimes. Sooner or later "asteroid to hit" will actually be true. But by then, having cried wolf one silly season too many, we will all be too blasé to care, or even notice.

'Boffin'

HACKWATCH

Sukhdev Sandhu

HACKS at the *Daily Telegraph*, who have just endured a new round of severe "austerity measures", were surprised to learn that the paper's new film critic was to be Sukhdev Sandhu, professor of English literature and Asian-American studies at New York University, who had been imported specially for the job.

Still, no doubt the expense would be justified. In a piece introducing the new boy, on 13 June, the *Torygraph* praised his "eclectic taste". Sandhu himself declared that he hoped to convey "a sense of fun, wonder and, on occasion, necessary contempt. It should be a gas." Sure enough, the methane level has been rising ever since...

14 June: Sandhu kicks off with *Spider-Man*. "Sam Raimi's $100 million adaptation of the Sixties Marvel comic is at its best when he junks the FX-and-marauding-soundtrack overload that constitute the summer blockbuster, a genre whose straitjacket *Spider-Man* doesn't entirely escape, and treats the story as a rites-of-passage *Bildungsroman*," he declares. While *Telegraph* readers are still searching for their encyclopaedias to see who this Bill-whassname was, Sandhu saves them the trouble by explaining: "Stranded in his almost existential isolation, he desires intimacy with the people around him, but spurns contact for fear of imperilling their lives. The trails of sticky webbing that the film shows gushing from his wrists represent the pent-up longing and sorrow of the compulsive masturbator."

21 June: An emphatic professorial thumbs-up for the new romantic comedy *Kissing Jessica Stein*, in which Jennifer Westfeldt falls in love with Heather Juergensen. Although it is about "same-sex desire", Sandhu hastens to reassure *Telegraph* readers that "this is by no means a lesbian film, or even a film about lesbianism". How so? "It eschews the pseudo-transgressive pretension of *High Art* or the cheap titillation of *Bound*." Sighs of relief all round, from Budleigh Salterton to Shepton Mallet.

28 June: Not much fun and wonder this week, alas. "Tofu. Cheese-and-onion sandwiches that have been left to sweat beneath the sunny display counters of local railway stations. The cod liver oil that my mother forced me to glug down when I was a child. These are a few of my least favourite foods. None of them, however, leaves a taste in the mouth as nasty as Jez Butterworth's new film, *Birthday Girl*. Frankly, I'd rather gargle battery acid than have to watch it again." Most annoying of all is the casting of Nicole Kidman. "She gives the same colourless and uninvolving performance she gives in all her films. She 'does' sexy with all the erotic charge with which one 'does' the washing up." Eh? Can this be the same newspaper which not so long ago described Kidman as "pure theatrical Viagra"?

5 July: "Infantilising, sentimental, dripping with saccharine morality. Such are the charges levelled – rightly – at Steven Spielberg's movies." After this brisk dismissal of the most successful film director of all time, Sandhu delivers the good news: Spielberg has at last made a good movie. The prof adores *Minority Report*, particularly the performance of Samantha Morton: "Eyebrowless, her face alabaster white and consumed with barely utterable horror, she reminded me of Tilda Swinton's performance piece at the Serpentine Gallery in 1995 during which she lay immured in a glass case for five days and nights. Morton doesn't possess Swinton's glacial repose and authority but, foetal and paralysed, she exhibits – embodies, rather – something far more captivating: the pain of foreknowledge." No doubt Sir Herbert Gussett will be booking a seat in the front row of the stalls forthwith.

12 July: Bollywood romance *Devdas*, the most expensive Indian film ever made, takes a pounding. "It looks absolutely horrid," Professor Sandhu sniffs, offended by the fact that the lovers live in houses with grand pianos and four-poster beds. Worse still, despite all the plush gaudiness, it fails to "convey the charmlessness of the bourgeoisie". The charmlessness of the *what*? Time, perhaps, for Charles Moore to send his new critic a socio-economic picture of the *Daily Telegraph*'s readership.

19 July: "'So you're a film critic?' asked the guy at a pub in Chalfont St Peter last week. I braced myself for the usual volley of abuse. 'Tell you what's a cracking film, *Scooby-Doo*. Dead funny. Can't wait for the sequel.'" The professor falls into deep despair: why do filmgoers like textureless, bland pap instead of going to classy low-budget films such as Bernard Rose's *ivans xtc*, in which Danny Huston plays a drug-addled, sex maniac hotshot Hollywood agent? Sandhu has only one criticism of the movie: "Huston is so brilliant that he masks the film's essential conservatism." How so? Even when Huston is dying of cancer, he never reassesses his life or repents his wicked ways. His tragic death, accompanied by a Wagner soundtrack, gives him "a heroic veneer from which the routine degeneracies of his life should rightly preclude him". Tory-voting readers of the *Daily Telegraph* have had to cope with many traumas in recent years, as their party crashes to one defeat after another and their favourite newspaper campaigns for the legalisation of cannabis. But could even this prepare them for the shocking discovery that the glamorisation of druggy degenerates represents "essential conservatism"?

26 July: Sandhu praises John Sayles's *Sunshine State*: "This film is an oasis in a quite abominable summer for new movies." But how many new movies has he seen before pronouncing so authoritatively that they're all abominable? Seven weeks after taking up the post, the Rilke-quoting academic has reviewed the grand total of, er, seven – leaving his poor assistant critic, Tim Robey, to write up no fewer than 45 other films in the same period. Austerity indeed: many *Telegraph* staff are muttering that they wish their jobs could be as austere.

RED faces in Downing Street after the brief stopover by King Abdullah of Jordan, en route to visit President Bush in the US. The wily king let slip details of his private meeting with Tony Blair and the latter's apparent concern at the Bush administration's drive to war with Iraq.

This was the first time the Dear Leader has admitted to having any concerns whatsoever, and Blair's bid to face both ways at once failed to impress King Abdullah.

Such is Blair's moral certitude, he has reacted with incredulity towards senior Labour figures who have tried to persuade him to think again. For he has once again assumed the role of prime minister, foreign minister and secretary of state for defence, and rolled them into one. He is relying on a handful of cheerleaders – including former foreign office minister Ben Bradshaw, now deputy to the leader of the House, Robin Cook – to prepare everyone else for Desert Storm 2.

Safe in the knowledge there has been no cabinet dissension over any of his foreign ventures thus far, Blair is determined to help his new friend, George Bush. The trouble is, not everyone around the cabinet table may support the war party of Messrs Blair, Straw and Hoon. Not a peep has been heard from former foreign secretary Cook. But for how much longer will he stay silent?

Margaret Beckett is an unlikely recruit to the war party; and the permanently tormented Clare Short is likely to rediscover her conscience again in time for the push against Baghdad. And what about the brooding chancellor, Gordon Brown? The wily Brown knows better than most that the bulk of the parliamentary Labour party has deep misgivings, that the chairman of the defence select committee, Bruce George MP, shares them and that a brace of influential union leaders have just voiced their opposition in a letter to the Guardian.

Brown is no touchy-feely liberal when it comes to Saddam Hussein but is already biting his nails more intensely than usual. Unlike the Texan US president, Brown does know where the oil comes from and fears a new world recession. Not so long ago, he ventured some of his worries over Blair's hawkishness to veteran Labour MP Tam Dalyell in a Commons lift. How long can it be before he makes some of his concerns known a little more widely?

"Following a long review, we've set some challenging performance targets for ourselves as a government"

MAN IN THE EYE

ALAN DUNCAN

THE "news" that Alan Duncan is gay is not a revelation. While the timing of the story conveniently knocked sacked Tory party chairman David Davis off the front pages, the story itself was common knowledge.

In the tearoom Duncan will always be remembered for exclaiming "That one got you, bitch boy!" (see *Eye* 934) after his doomed buddy William Hague landed a particularly caustic riposte on Tony Blair in the Commons.

In his announcement Duncan made great play of the need for candour in public life: "I think the only realistic way to behave these days, particularly if you are a politician, is to be absolutely honest and upfront, however inconvenient that may be at first." Odd that such admirable honesty didn't extend to reminding the public how he made his fortune in the oil business, a past which may have at least contributed to his nickname, "Dipstick".

From 1982 until 1988 Duncan worked for the oil company Marc Rich and Co. When he joined it already had a dubious history: four years previously, owner Marc Rich had fled to Switzerland. For many years he was a fugitive from the US where he was wanted for charges of tax evasion and racketeering. He eventually received one of the more dubious presidential "pardons" from a departing Bill Clinton in 2001 (*Eye* 1021).

Duncan was sent to the Far East to run the Singapore office and, in particular, to coordinate a secret deal whereby the Brunei government supplied oil to South Africa, in contravention of UN and Commonwealth sanctions, via a Japanese company called Marubeni. It was claimed that the oil was destined for Japanese customers. It wasn't and Rich got richer by sanctions-busting (*Eye* 793).

Duncan also did well under Rich, taxed at generous Singaporean levels; but when the operation was exposed he returned to London and set up as a freelance trader, advising the Pakistani government. It was in this capacity he made a killing in the Gulf War, supplying tankers to Pakistan while her regular supplier, Kuwait, was otherwise engaged.

More dirty dabbling in the oil trade emerged at Dutch-based group Vitol in 1993 where he was working as a consultant (*Eye* 828). Vitol made a killing selling weathered Kuwaiti crude oil (full of sand and sea water) to Zambia. The contract was to supply Saudi Arabian crude oil (light or medium), which is much more expensive. It would have taken someone with a real knowledge of the oil industry to know the difference between the two, and to understand that the Zambian government was being short-changed. Someone like Alan Duncan MP, perhaps?

In 1995 the *Eye* reported that Duncan had allied himself with that other model of probity, Jonathan Aitken, calling for a privacy bill to be slapped on the sleazy media (*Eye* 870). This was three months after a newspaper report told how he had bought a Westminster council house through a friend at a large discount and so forced his resignation as PPS.

So when it comes to "being absolutely honest and upfront", Duncan will no doubt thank us for reminding readers that he isn't.

LORD Archer's former political advisor Stephan Shakespeare, having recovered from his connection with the tarnished peer, now runs the country's leading internet pollster, YouGov.com, from the office of the *Eye*'s favourite spin doctors, Bell Pottinger.

He recently ran a poll asking people who they thought should win Channel 4's *Big Brother*. When the answers came back, he sent a flunkey to the nearest bookmaker to place a forecast bet on the winner and runner-up in the correct order. Incredibly the internet poll came up trumps and Shakespeare won his £10 bet at 20-1.

It's not clear if he told his client about his profitable use of their information. But it's nice to see his time working with the slippery Archer wasn't entirely wasted.

THE US state department's office of protocol has just revealed that Tony Blair gave President Bush a waxed Barbour jacket during his visit to Camp David in 2001.

The jacket cost the British taxpayer £114, but because of Britain's antediluvian secrecy laws it is unlikely UK citizens will learn whether or not Dubya returned the favour by presenting Tony Blair with a bomber jacket.

GIVEN that the downfall last year of former Europe minister Keith Vaz was largely due to his interest in passport applications from the sub-continent (Sid and Doris Hinduja), one might have thought the member for Leicester East would keep quiet on the subject.

But before the Commons broke for summer, Vazza tabled an early-day motion calling on the government "to restore visa facilities in the sub-continent to deal with the huge volume of applications". Those waiting to have applications processed are now wondering if Vaz's intervention will speed them along – or will their forms now be gone through with an extra fine-toothed comb?

LATE last month Baroness Symons had one of those days that must make being an ethical Labour foreign office minister so worthwhile.

At 5pm on 22 July she met Jeb Bush, the governor of Florida who helped his brother get elected president of the United States thanks to the disenfranchisement of thousands of voters in his state.

At 7pm Symons attended a government reception at Farnborough International, one of the biggest arms fairs in the world. And at 8.30pm she was whisked off to another arms sales party – the BAE Systems gala reception in the agreeable surroundings of Hampton Court.

Can't get much more ethical than that!

"It means New Labour will have to disclose previously held convictions"

"According to your ID card you were against the introduction of ID cards."

HP SAUCE SPECIAL

JOBS FOR THE BOYS (AND GIRLS)

FORMER ministers are queuing, it seems, to lobby their erstwhile colleagues on behalf of private firms as they cash in on their inside knowledge.

Baroness Jay, former leader of the Lords, is one of them. According to the latest report from the advisory committee on business appointments, she has a new job advising Amey, which is winning private finance initiative contracts in schools, the railway and London Underground.

The committee allowed Jay to take the post in January but stipulated: "She should not be involved personally in lobbying any government ministers or officials on Amey's behalf for 12 months after she left office." So she can become a door-to-door saleswoman for Amey from October. She has had to bury some political differences to take the post, though. Former Tory education secretary John Patten sits on the Amey board.

Former culture secretary Chris Smith also has a new job – as "adviser" to the Walt Disney Company. The committee said he had to wait six months before taking up the post, and "should not become personally involved in lobbying ministers or officials in government departments for 12 months after he left office".

Smith can start soliciting former colleagues next month. The communications bill, which will let Disney buy a slice of British terrestrial TV, is on the way' but the committee told Smith to "stand aside from involvement in any response by Walt Disney to the government's decision on the new BBC franchises". So he'll be advising on how to draw Mickey Mouse's ears, then.

Former Northern Ireland under-secretary George Howarth is topping his MP's salary up with another £15,000-£20,000 a year as parliamentary adviser to betting firm William Hill, and former defence minister Lord Gilbert is now an international adviser to HSBC Insurance.

THE advisory committee also monitors the business appointments of former senior civil servants – and the private sector loves a man in uniform.

Air Marshall Sir Timothy Jenner, deputy commander-in-chief of Strike Command, is now a non-executive director of Serco. The company is bidding to take over fire-fighting crews and other RAF ground support staff and hoping for warplane PFI contracts too.

Vice Admiral J. McNally, former commandant of the Royal college of Defence Studies, is now a naval adviser to Flagship Training Ltd, a subsidiary of arms firm Vosper Thorneycroft, which has contracts to train the navy's sailors. Air Marshal Sir Peter Norris, formerly deputy chief of defence procurement, is now a defence adviser to arms firm Alenia Marconi Systems.

Foreign office mandarins also have an edge in the jobs market. Sir Graham Boyce, former ambassador to Cairo, promptly became an adviser to the emir of Qatar though the Committee insisted he should *not* "revisit Egypt on the emir's behalf nor offer the emir advice on Egypt" until six months after he left office. Sir Graham also became an adviser to oil giant Shell, although for six months he could not "give advice to Shell on Egyptian issues or have dealings with companies there".

Sir Graham Burton, former British high commissioner in Nigeria, is now a consultant with private security firm Control Risks Group, although he too was not allowed to talk about Nigeria for six months.

MERCK & CO INC: CORRECTION

CONTRARY to our suggestion in the last Eye ("Labour's business friends"), the British drugs firm Generics UK, which was raided by the fraud squad earlier this year, does not belong to the American company Merck & Co, Inc. Generics UK is a subsidiary of Merck KGaA, a German firm with no connection to Merck & Co. Apologies for the confusion.

COURT CIRCULAR

STEPHEN LAMPORT has received his knighthood and silver-framed signed picture of Brenda and done his last day as Prince Charles's private secretary. St James's Palace now awaits the arrival of Sir Michael Peat, until now Brenda's treasurer, to take over.

One of the first tasks facing Peat and Mark Bolland, Charles's freelance spinner, will be how to advise Charles on Prince William's future. Preliminary discussions have already taken place about what William should do after university. The Queen, Prince Philip and Sir Robin Janvrin, Brenda's private secretary, have all had a say. Although Charles is desperate to avoid the large councils of the great and good that gathered at Buckingham Palace to chart his own future, he has had to keep Mr Tony informed. He has also taken advice from the Bishop of London, Richard Chartres.

Much to Prince Philip's disgust, William is likely to be the first senior royal to abandon the tradition of military service. The once-mooted idea of a roving commonwealth ambassadorship has been shelved as too aimless and unlikely to allow William to develop his full potential.

The latest idea is that William could go into the City and do a spell at a firm such as KPMG. Sir William Peat, Sir Michael's great-grandfather, was appointed financial adviser to Edward VII in 1906 and the Peats, via the family firm, have been involved in royal finances ever since. Sir Michael Peat was at KPMG before joining the royal staff and will be succeeded as Brenda's treasurer by Alan Reid – of KPMG. The accountancy firm would be only too happy to reciprocate and provide a job for the future heir to the throne.

Bolland, although keen on the concept, is worried about William being photographed with hoorays in flash cars and blowing his bonuses on champagne and wild women. But William is probably too shrewd to do such things in front of the cameras – and also too independent-minded to do what the flunkeys tell him. Unlike his father, who did whatever job he was told to, William has let it be known that unless he wants to do it, he won't do it. There could be turbulent days ahead.

'Flunkey'

JUST how "retired" does Arthur Scargill intend to be? Officially King Arthur hung up his pit boots last week to a flurry of mealy-mouthed media comment. But while Scargill has stepped down as president of the vastly diminished National Union of Mineworkers, his new position as "honorary president" comes with a monthly £1,000 "consultancy fee" price tag – on top of the £40,000 he will receive from his union pension.

King Arthur may decide to spend more time with the dwindling band of supporters in his ill-fated Socialist Labour Party – but he may not. A few years ago, Scargill fought off a challenge from within the party by wielding the block vote of the Lancashire NUM, even though the county contained not a single working miner.

Scargill's successor as NUM chairman, mild mannered Northumberland miner's leader, Ian Lavery, may soon discover that King Arthur has little intention of spending more time tending roses in his garden. Lavery will be fortunate to avoid the brickbats that Arthur has thrown at many of his formerly loyal lieutenants, most of whom – in the north-east and Wales in particular – have fallen out with him. In recent years much of King Arthur's venom has been directed towards two union officials based in the imposing headquarters of the North East Area NUM in Durham, Dave Guy and Dave Hopper. The Durham twosome are reckoned to have done a good job by many of the thousands of ex-miners they represent who continue to seek compensation for illness and injury gained underground. But this hasn't stopped a piqued King Arthur from boycotting the annual Durham Miners Gala, snubbing Messrs Guy and Hopper into the bargain.

Ironically this is an honour Scargill shares with a local MP, who just happens to be prime minister. For this year, so keen was Tony Blair to spend a day with the Durham miners he not only failed to reply to an official invitation – breaking a tradition that stretches back nearly a century – but he decided to open a shopping centre instead a few miles down the road.

FALL out continues in the aftermath of Derek Simpson's astonishing victory over Tony Blair's favourite trade unionist, Sir Ken Jackson in the engineering union, AEEU-Amicus.

With Sir Ken away licking his wounds in Spain, attention focuses on the extraordinary last minute bid by Sir Ken and his cohorts to have the AEEU-Amicus ballot discounted and rerun after a fourth count had found Simpson the winner. Sir Ken took to the airwaves on the Today programme demanding a re-run because of "complaints about irregularities".

Strangely the interviewer, John Humphrys, neglected to ask Sir Ken where these complaints had come from. Had he done so, he might have discovered that the "complaints about irregularities" came from none other than Derek Simpson himself, after the Guardian and Independent claimed that some paid union officials had been acting improperly. Meanwhile at the union's splendid Bromley HQ questions are being asked about the continued office tenancy of one John Spellar – a key Jackson supporter and a government transport minister. Spellar has maintained a baleful presence in the building for the best part of 20 years. But not for much longer it would seem.

'Blackleg'

Church News

TONY BLAIR is still irritated at feeling bounced by the *Times* into appointing Rowan Williams, currently archbishop of Wales, as the next archbishop of Canterbury – and he has been asking some awkward questions.

Since George Carey announced that he would be retiring in October, the *Times* has run a pro-Williams agenda – doing its best to rubbish other contenders for the big mitre, including Richard Chartres of London, James Jones of Liverpool and Christopher Herbert of St Albans.

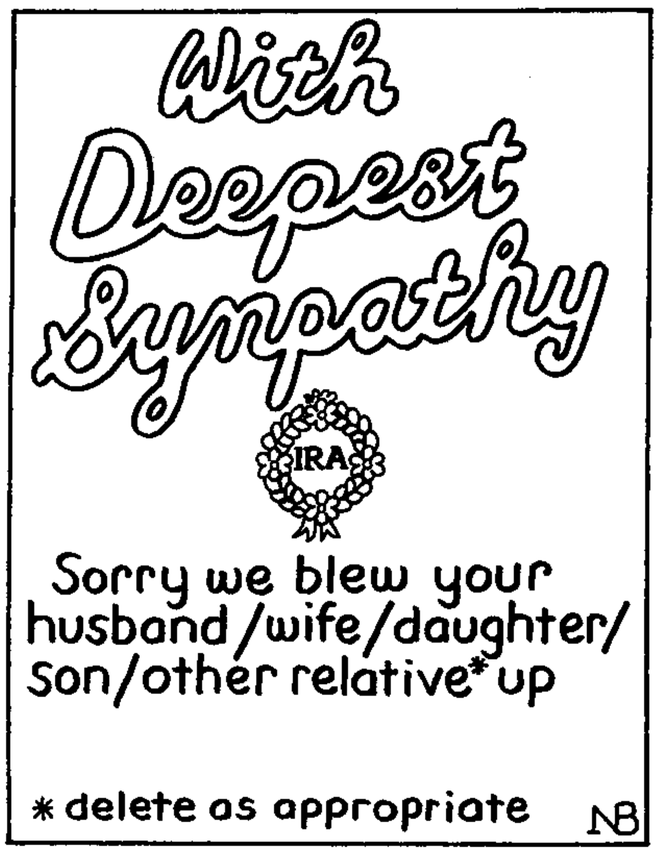
Williams's biggest threat, however, was perceived by the Thunderer to be Michael Nazir-Ali, the Pakistani-born bishop of Rochester. Nazir-Ali became the subject of a whispering campaign within the Church of England establishment and the *Times* made sure that every whiff of controversy was prominently reported. This culminated in a lead story that CofE officials were investigating a number of allegations, including that Nazir-Ali had lied about his degree. He was subsequently cleared of all the smears.

When the *Times* discovered that Williams was one of the two choices of the commission appointed by Blair to choose the new archbishop it splashed on the story, presenting the appointment as a *fait accompli*. Why the paper was only told the name of one of the candidates remains a mystery, as both had to have been supported by two-thirds of the commission – but the commission had exercised its right to list the two candidates in order of preference rather than neutrally side by side in alphabetical order.

The leak made it virtually impossible for Blair, who had only just received the nominations himself, to exercise his right to choose the other candidate, or even reject both names. To do so would have caused an open row with the church, placed the tricky issue of disestablishment on the political agenda, left Tony open to yet more accusations of control freakery and, er, upset the people of Wales. Downing Street also contacted Buckingham Palace about the leak as the appointment is technically one made by the Queen following the PM's advice.

Blair bowed to the inevitable. But he is very keen to know which of the 14-member appointments commission, chaired by Dame Elisabeth Butler-Sloss, let the cat out of the bag. Blair's appointments secretary, William Chapman, who attended meetings in a non-voting capacity, has been asked to look into the matter.

New Greetings Cards No. 94



JUST FANCY THAT!

Wednesday, December 13: Morning meeting. Desmond is late and deflated. He says he has been to the bank, but does not elaborate.

The latest *Private Eye* contains a savage attack on him. This cues a rant about press coverage. I've heard his wife was upset by the *Daily Mail*, which called him "Desmond the Degrader".

He becomes very emotional: "I've worked my way up from f****** nothing. Porn has never harmed anyone. It doesn't exploit women. I know what you think, Rosie, but is it better to stack shelves in Sainsbury's for peanuts or take your knickers off for me?"

— Rosie Boycott's Diary
Sunday Times, 28 July 2002

BANKS & BITCHING SOCIETIES

THE departure of Ian Harley as chief executive of Abbey National caused few surprises in the banking world last month.

Harley, a dour Scottish accountant, had been Dead Man Walking since the wholesale banking division of Abbey had been forced to make massive provisions against its portfolio of US junk bonds, Enron loans and other dodgy investments back in May. Shares have fallen from nearly £13 a year ago to just over £7 now.

Harley's departure was also hastened by the arrival in April of flashy former Credit Suisse First Boston (CSFB) bond salesman Steven Hester as finance director. William Hague-lookalike Hester, who was himself elbowed aside at CSFB last autumn, showed his fangs early on persuading Abbey to make the huge kitchen sink provisions that floored Harley.

Hester has told friends he wants Harley's job and has been buttering up chairman Lord Burns ever since. What also helped grease the slide for Harley was a vitriolic letter to Burns leaked to the Sunday papers a few weeks ago from Gareth "Mr Blobby" Jones, the former head of the Abbey wholesale bank who left late last year.

Jones, who was Harley's bitter rival for the chief executive's job a few years ago, claimed that he had advised that Abbey should make substantial provisions against the loan portfolio before he had left. This was a little rich given that Jones was the man directly responsible in the first place for the huge chunks of Enron, private equity and other shaky loans now provided for.

But Hester may have moved too early. The City view is that Burns – taking tips from his old boss Peter Middleton at Barclays – will think twice before appointing the former bond salesman as CEO. They recall only too well the last similar investment banker appointed as chief executive of a FTSE company – John Mayo at Marconi.

Warballs

Kylie suits the new millennium. Good-time pop music is what sells right now. Post-September 11, this trend has been even stronger. We're looking for things that make us feel better about ourselves and our world. That's part of the reason the World Cup soccer was so huge and it's part of the reason Kylie's surge continues. She combines forward-looking optimism with comfortable nostalgia. Her current career phase will last as long as these values are saleable.

— *Sydney Morning Herald*

The tragic events of September 11, 2001, have caused a dramatic change in the way individuals now view the necessity of personal and home protection. To many this change is an extreme from previous feelings of security while at home. The decision to own a firearm for self/family/home protection is never an easy one, regardless of past experience with firearms.

This new, or revived, interest in ownership comes complete with a new found sense of responsibility. A responsibility that experienced firearms owners have always taken with the utmost care and regard.

It is with this sense of responsibility that the VIRGINIA SHOOTING SPORTS ASSOCIATION, Inc., suggests to new and/or inexperienced firearms owners the importance of attaining the proper training in the safe and responsible handling, use, and storage of firearms. Typically, injuries and accidents occur due to lack of education in the proper use and storage of firearms. Don't let this happen to YOU!

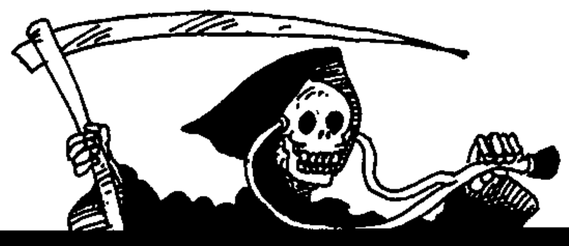
— From VSSA website.

SIR – The article "RSPCA seeks cuts amid spending row" (report, July 24) will unsettle dedicated staff.

The society has made no secret of the fact that it is reviewing the budget which is intended to streamline the organisation. This cost-cutting exercise is a result of September 11, and the still volatile markets, and is not unique to the RSPCA. As your report stated, no decisions have been taken by our council where those efficiencies are to be made.

— Letter from Peter Davies, Director General RSPCA, *Daily Telegraph*

"In the old days someone would have helped that young lady"



DOING THE ROUNDS

An undone deal

DID the government jump the gun in announcing its deal with BUPA to treat 5,000 NHS patients a year at the private Redwood Hospital in Surrey?

The announcement was spun by "new" Labour as a "done deal" on 4 December 2001 and widely reported as such in the media. The BBC news website wrote of "health secretary Alan Milburn's announcement of a deal" and the *Indy* reported that "the number of patients treated at Redwood hospital will more than double next year when it becomes `an express surgery centre' for routine operations on the NHS".

Yet a written response by health minister John Hutton on 13 January to Dr Evan Harris, Lib Dem member for Oxford West and Abingdon, told a rather different story: "On 4 December 2001, we announced that we are in discussion over a proposal for the BUPA Redwood facility to become a diagnostic and treatment centre, treating National Health Service patients. Discussions over a range of detailed issues – including prices and staffing issues – are continuing. Our aim is to secure high quality services for patients and value for money. A final agreement will not be signed until discussions are satisfactorily concluded."

For a government seeking value for money in such a sensitive negotiation, it seems unbelievably naive to brief the media that a deal had been done when it patently hadn't. Given the widespread coverage, it placed BUPA in an absurdly strong bargaining position. If the deal is announced by Milburn in the press, before pricing and staffing issues have been resolved, BUPA can pretty much charge what it wants as the government is unlikely to back down.

M.D. has yet to discover what BUPA has decided to charge the DoH, but private hospitals are generally more costly than NHS trusts. In Surrey, the cost of an NHS hip replacement ranges from £4,000 to £7,000, whereas BUPA charges individual clients between £6,000 and £9,000. Local government legislation forbids the announcement of provisional deals where large amounts of public money are at stake, and it seems inconceivable Milburn was not aware of the dangers of presumptive disclosure.

So why did he do it? Surely it had nothing to do with the National Confidential Enquiry into Perioperative Deaths (NCEPOD), also published on, er, 4 December. The department of health knew on 30 October that this was to be the day of publication and received an advanced copy of its damning findings on 21 November.

The report found that pathology departments lacked the resources to accurately assess the spread of disease, making treatment much harder. And a shortage of scanning equipment and staff to operate it meant that many patients are undergoing exploratory operations just to find out what is wrong with them when in other civilised countries a scan would suffice. There was also chaos in the hospital records system and a dire shortage of nurses.

As Ron Hoyle, NCEPOD's principal clinical co-ordinator, put it: "If you come in as an emergency, you may not be operated on by a specialist surgeon, or have your case assessed by a specialist multi-disciplinary team. It isn't good when the surgeon is a general surgeon. The government has been saying everything's getting better in cancer care – well I don't think it is. There isn't a single mention of emergency care for cancer patients in the NHS cancer plan." By some strange coincidence, this damning report was knocked off the headlines by the announcement of the Redwood hospital "deal". Were the two related? I think the district auditor should be told.

M.D.

DOWN ON THE FARM

THE giveaway to the last of the three reports commissioned by the Beloved Leader to "draw a line" under the foot-and-mouth disaster is its cover.

The front of the report by Dr Iain Anderson's "lessons learned" inquiry shows a solitary sheep standing on a moor in golden sunlight against a thunderous sky. Inside are more pretty full-page photographs, showing woolly lambs, sheep, cows and pigs, all in the pink of health. Only in the margin do one or two tiny pictures show dead animals, to remind us that the purpose of this report is to inquire why millions of healthy animals ended up either spiralling into the sky in clouds of stinking smoke or being bulldozed into holes in the ground.

All this is a perfect metaphor for the document itself. What Anderson had been asked to look into was one of the greatest acts of government maladministration on record. Thanks to the lack of any proper contingency planning, the government's response to an epidemic of which it had been warned two years earlier that there was an "extraordinarily high risk" was a complete shambles.

Because it had made no preparation for the vaccination programme which in almost any other country in the world would have been used to halt the epidemic in its tracks, the government fell back on what it saw as the only alternative available by killing millions of animals, the vast majority of which it turned out were healthy and unlikely to get the disease anyway. In doing so it broke just about every animal health, welfare and environmental law in the book.

Yet in 200 pages of bland waffle, complete with those pretty pictures, the Anderson report performs the miracle of airbrushing almost all this out of history.

A glaring example is the way Anderson deals with the awkward fact that what it calls the "pre-

emptive cull", under which millions of healthy animals were destroyed, was illegal. The most revealing admission in the report is tucked away on page 93 where Anderson quotes the government's chief vet Jim Scudamore as having argued at the time that the government "probably" had no legal powers to carry out this cull.

In other words, the government knew it was illegal. But instead of looking into the horrific implications of this, Anderson simply floats on, only returning to the point in his recommendations, one of which is that the government must ensure that in future it has the legal powers to carry out such a cull. He thus tacitly manages to admit Scudamore was right, but only in a way which lets the government completely off the hook.

By similar trickery Anderson downplays every significant lesson he should have drawn from this catastrophe, not least the total fiasco of the contingency planning under which, by EU law, the government should immediately have been ready to carry out the vaccination by which 90 percent of the disaster could have been avoided. Of all the pictures in his report perhaps the most apt is one showing a huge close-up of a climber's boot. If this is meant to symbolise the enormous boot slammed down on the face of Britain's countryside in 2001, Anderson's report is the shine on its toecap.

'Muckspreader'

WATERWORLD

EVERYTHING is on the up at Kelda, aka Yorkshire Water.

Profits are up 26 percent to £197m for the year 2001/2. And the pay of managing director Kevin Whiteman was up 92 percent to £221,000, although chairman John Napier received a package worth £337,000, an increase of a mere 34 percent.

Also up are the numbers of fish killed by Yorkshire Water. The company has been fined £2,000 by Harrogate magistrates for allowing sewage to pollute the River Crimple, killing 40,000 fish including trout, chub and eels.

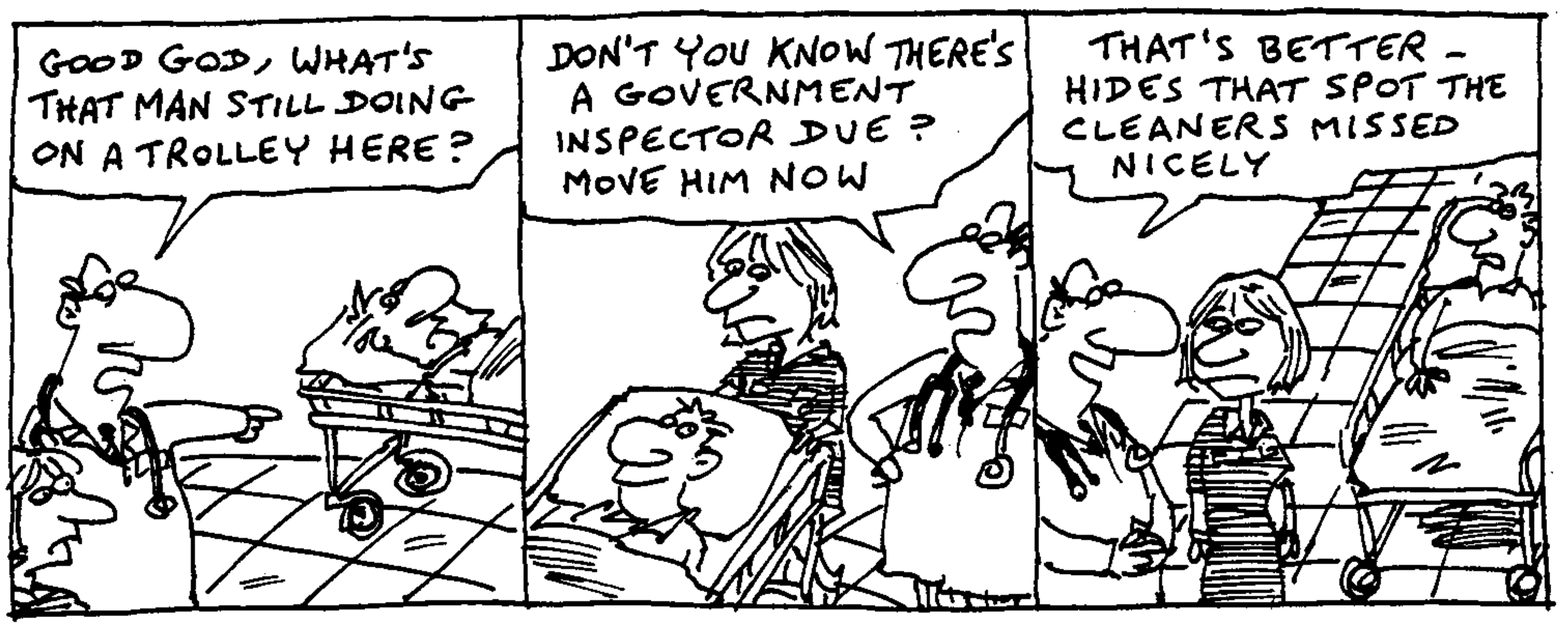
The Environment Agency's league table of the worst industrial polluters for 2001, published at the end of July, places Yorkshire Water in seventh place with fines totalling £52,000 from the worst 10 incidents. The company's annual report warns shareholders to expect an even worse record in the coming year, which Kelda blames on a tougher policy by the Environment Agency.

Yorkshire Water is no longer the heaviest polluter among water companies. The Environment Agency's top ten includes United Utilites Water plc (fines of £70,500), Anglian Water Services Ltd (£59,000) and Thames Water Utilities Ltd (£57,600).

Maybe they would be more inclined to clean up their acts if the fines were closer to their profit margins – or their bosses' salaries.

off your trolley

REEVE & WAY


GOOD GOD, WHAT'S THAT MAN STILL DOING ON A TROLLEY HERE?
DON'T YOU KNOW THERE'S A GOVERNMENT INSPECTOR DUE? MOVE HIM NOW
THAT'S BETTER - HIDES THAT SPOT THE CLEANERS MISSED NICELY

ITV

Elimidate (ITV)
Wudja Cudja (ITV)

IT IS the season to be silly... although for ITV these days, it's a season that lasts 52 weeks of the year. We blame the programme makers and the programme makers blame the advertisers; and the advertisers blame the programme makers as well for not delivering the all-important audience of braindead but high-spending 16-to-24s.

Thus the programme makers do what they are told and go off and make series like *Elimidate* and *Wudja Cudja*. At the moment these feeble little shows go out after the news on Thursday evening, safely out of the way of most viewers. But today's late-night tat can often become tomorrow's mainstream ratings puller, given an infusion of money and dog-loving gurnstress Davina McCall.

ITV is full of desperate men who haven't quite been fired yet, and no idea is so facile they won't seriously consider it. Funny, really: you always think that things couldn't get any worse, and then programmes like these come along.

Elimidate's format is so simple even media planners could get it. Top-heavy northern totty presenter Kerry McFadden takes an apparently random selection of boys and girls in their early 20s to some exotic location (Sun City in South Africa one week, Iceland the next) and plays a variation of *Blind Date* with them.

One girl has four boys to choose from. They show off in various stupid ways, and after each round she eliminates one of them. At the end she is left with the boy she likes the most and they exchange vats of saliva for the cameras. A small caption usually reads "Leanne gave Jonathan the brush-off that night and they haven't spoken since". Then, after the commercial break, one boy has four girls to choose from, and the game is played out again. And that's it.

It's the people, though, who really make *Elimidate* what it is. "Hi, my name's Caroline," says one blank-eyed slapper in a dim monotone, "and I'm a student from Essex. I'd describe myself as caring, confident and wild. I'm interested in astronomy and the first thing I notice about a guy is his shoes." Steve, a firefighter from Essex, says he likes tall girls and also short girls, before showing us his party trick: tummy rolling, which no one has ever done before. Craig, a fitness instructor from a county south of Suffolk but north of Kent, says: "If I could describe myself in three words it would be absolute god's gift," and he's not joking. Compared to this lot, the inmates of the *Big Brother* house are like Fellows of All Souls.

And it's not as though the games they play are triumphs of the researcher's imagination. In Sun City a few weeks ago one crucial round was decided on a game of spin the bottle. Last week they went to Kenya, to play in the mud and make a lot of puns on the word "bush". As it happens, Leanne gave Jonathan the brush-off that night and they haven't spoken since. "And in part two this lucky guy meets these gorgeous girls and sees who's best at handling their melons." Amazingly enough, it was real melons they were talking about, and not breasts at all.

"If you win Big Brother, are you enough of a celebrity to enter Celebrity Big Brother?"

On *Wudja Cudja*, motor-mouthed Davina wannabes Jayne and Abbie scour the beaches of Europe for tourists willing to do stupid things for modest sums of money. Most of these seem to involve bottoms (swiping credit cards between the cheeks), breasts (licking foodstuffs from them) and scrotums (introducing live scorpions into men's swimming trunks – or did I make that one up?)

Someone called Paula licks cheese off people's feet. Another bloke must drink three bottles of beer in two minutes through sweaty socks. The camera leaps about in traditional yoof TV style; dismal house music plays in the background; Jayne and Abbie, who have a great future in hospital radio, talk non-stop. Watch this and you'll have an instant hangover, whether you have drunk anything or not. And if one episode isn't enough, there's another one straight afterwards on ITV2. Come back Jeremy Beadle, all is forgiven.

'Couch Potato'

MEDIA NEWS

IN THE search to replace Jeremy Vine, *Newsnight* executives claim to have cast their net wide, with candidates ranging from serious journalists with independent views and proven track records to Andrew "Brillopad" Neill.

Neill certainly faces an uphill struggle. Not only is the *Newsnight* production team none too keen to work for a union-basher and well-known right-winger, but BBC managers may be reluctant to boost the media profile of a man who has been tweaking their tails ever since he helped found Sky television in the late 80s.

It's unlikely Gavyn Davies, the BBC chairman, will be keen to see more of Neill either after Brillopad labelled Davies's 1999 report on the proposed digital levy as "about as independent as Pravda... a proposal of such breathtaking arrogance could only have emanated from the nabobs of the BBC and their Blairite allies in government".

Not that Neill was on great terms with Davies's predecessor, Sir Christopher Bland. They went head-to-head on an edition of *Newsnight* in February 2000. Bland was there to argue that the government's statement on the corporation's future funding should be welcomed as a victory; Neill would have none of it. After a fractious encounter the interview closed with Bland questioning Neill's mental health. Mad, bad and dangerous to know? Perhaps he'll get the job after all.

THE possibility of Andrew Neill presenting *Newsnight* is not the only shock awaiting fans of serious political coverage on the BBC.

Mark Lamarr of *Never Mind The Buzzcocks* is being considered for a political slot and so is Johnny Vaughan, the expensive and largely viewer-free chat show host and "comedy" writer.

Having already cost the Beeb more than £2m, the race is on to find something that Vaughan *can* do.

DUMB BRITAIN

The Weakest Link
(Page 3 Girls Special), BBC1

Anne Robinson: Which S is the only country to have a land border with Portugal?
Page 3 Girl: Pass.
Anne Robinson: Which letter comes between P and R?
Page 3 Girl: O.
Anne Robinson: What kind of dozen is 13?
Page 3 Girl: Half a dozen.
Anne Robinson: In which continent is the river Danube?
Page 3 Girl: France.

IT'S official: ITV's viewing figures are the worst ever, with a monthly audience share in July of 22.4 percent.

The success of Channel 4's *Big Brother*, BBC sports coverage and seasonal variations have all been blamed. But there could be another factor. Take out the soaps and the ITV summer schedule is mostly lightweight pop "news" shows: *Neighbours From Hell 2002*, *Scoop! Scandal! And Disaster* and *The Angriest Men In Britain*; ancient James Bond films and light ents programming such as *You've Been Framed* and *Home On Their Own*.

It feels more like a cheap copy of a shoestring cable or satellite channel – which is why ITV viewers are fleeing in droves to the real thing.

THE stress is obviously beginning to tell at the rolling ITN News Channel on its second anniversary.

Of the 46 producers who joined at its launch, just six or so remain and the ITN recruitment freeze means none has been replaced. Freelancers and a few sad exiles from Channel 5 have joined the struggle to keep the channel on air. But such is the perilous state of staffing, there have been a few understandable misses - such as the recent plane crash over Germany.

As soon as the first casualty figures appeared, Sky News and BBC News 24 launched "crash specials" while the ITN News Channel failed even to get the story on air until the morning. The tragedy happened after 11pm when, as another brilliant cash-saving measure, operations shut down for the night and the final hour is repeated until 0600.

The only good news for ITN was that no one was watching.

MORE on Kevin O'Sullivan, the *Mirror*'s "anti-Big Brother" hack, who quoted the *Eye*'s description of his "rank hypocrisy and pointless, almost scary spumes of vitriol" in our last issue but couldn't refute it.

The description looks even more fitting now that we learn that for last year's *Big Brother*, a certain journalist named Kevin O'Sullivan was desperate to be part of the fun and to show his support and enthusiasm as a talking head on E4's accompanying sideshow, *Big Brother's Little Brother*.

Alas, viewers were spared this treat. His stance this year couldn't have been a fit of pique, could it?

9.00 FILM Disturbing Behaviour (David Nutter, 1998) (T) (S) Mediocre thriller *Observer*

THE THINGS THEY SAY

"I am not particularly interested in Seventies ideas. Someone walks in with *The Onedin Line* or *The Forsyte Saga* every couple of months and I show them the door."

— Nick Elliot, controller of ITV drama, quoted in the *Independent* in April 1998 – four years before his remake of *Forsyte Saga* screened on ITV this spring.

GOING LIVE

LAST Friday the BBC's *Six O'Clock News* went live to reporter Catherine Marston up to her knees in water outside a picturesque cottage in Pickering, covering the floods in North Yorkshire.

Heartstrings were pulled as a family was seen leaving the house. The baby was carefully carried past the camera and the couple gave each other a tender kiss as they left. All very sad. And very surprising when News24 went "live" to the same scene five minutes later. Obviously the family had forgotten something and had had to return in order to evacuate their home all over again.

AD NAUSEAM

NOMINATIONS for Ad Nauseam's Most Nauseating Ad award are flooding in, but early polls suggest two spots are surging ahead.

In the automotive category, Mazda's "Zoom-zoom" leads the field. This ad, created by a US agency, first appeared in February but is enjoying a second burst. It's a pitiful example of blanket global-branding featuring stock-shots of cars backed with a risible ditty: the "zoom-zoom" song. (Sample lyrics: "Zoom, zoom, zoom. [Yeah, zoom zoom zoom]. Zoom-zoom.")

The forced doggerel means the ad can run all round the world without having to be expensively redubbed. Interestingly, the Independent Television Commission codes on advertising state that car adverts "must not imply that speed limits may be exceeded". Surely inviting young drivers to zoom, zoom, zoom is a flagrant violation of these laws? Readers should complain to the ITC and have this brain-mush removed immediately.

Also scraped from the bottom of the ideas

SPLIT personalities

Bob Moore

Barbie & Ken Livingstone

barrel is Lloyds TSB's attempt to "do a Gold Blend" with actors John Thomson and Joely Richardson. Rainey Kelly Campbell Roalfe/Y&R have so far produced three spots involving an unlikely romance that flowers in a flower shop. What's unlikely about it is the idea that any woman would fall for a man who insists on discussing insurance policies. But the Gold Blend campaign remains adland's holy grail: long-running, cheap to make and spawning its own publicity. People even paid to buy compilation tapes of the will-they-won't-they saga.

Lloyds would love to do the same and so is shoehorning house insurance, pensions and wavering APRs into a painfully contrived non-epic romance. The Eye can reveal that the pisspoor next instalment, filmed a fortnight ago, takes place back at Joely's house after a break-in – home insurance being the "hook".

THE free London ad-rag *Metro* led its front page with an elegant juxtaposition on 26 July.

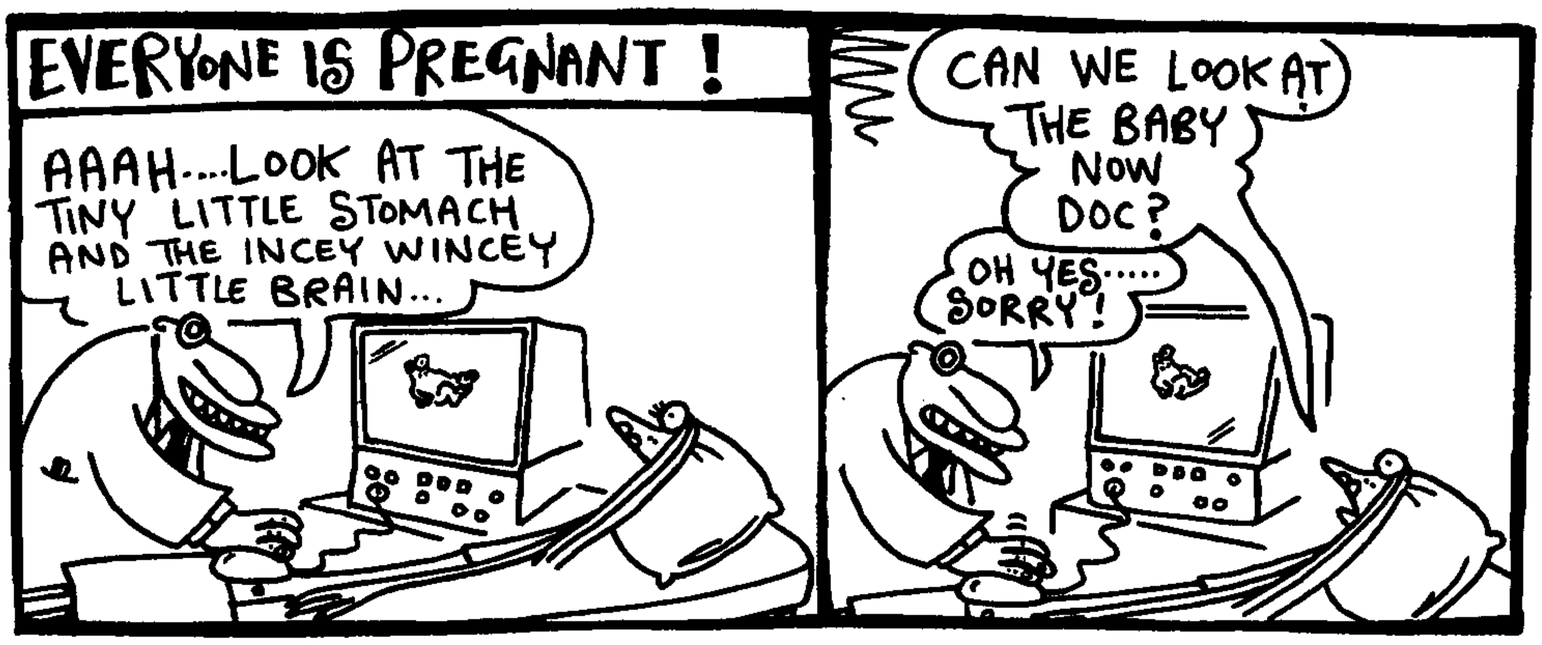
"Divided World" sighed the headline above two pictures: one of a gaunt African child fed on maize alone; the other of an obese American youth chomping on a burger.

The left hand image accompanied the story of a £40m appeal for starving Africans; the other scoffed at a group of overweight Americans who were suing fast food chains for making them overweight.

It was a poignant contrast – especially with the ad on *Metro's* backpage offering a McDonald's breakfast roll for a lip-smacking £1.99.

SUPERMODELS

KERBER


EVERYONE IS PREGNANT !
AAAH....LOOK AT THE TINY LITTLE STOMACH AND THE INCEY WINCEY LITTLE BRAIN...
CAN WE LOOK AT THE BABY NOW DOC?
OH YES..... SORRY!

ROTTEN BOROUGHS

FORGING AHEAD

THE time-bomb under Flintshire county council's bent administration (*Eyes passim*) has finally exploded after an employment tribunal ruled that Andy Sutton, the Labour council's former internal auditor, had been sacked... for doing his job properly.

Sutton told the tribunal of 38 instances of dodgy behaviour by senior council officers, many revealed in this column, including forgery of documents, lying to the Welsh Office and disturbing lapses of record-keeping. When Sutton tried to investigate alleged wrongdoing he was obstructed and denied access to vital documents. The panel agreed that he had been constructively dismissed and victimised for being a whistleblower — which may result in a crushing award against Flintshire when the tribunal delivers its full judgment.

The first casualty of the tribunal's decision looks like being Andrew Loveridge, the Labour council's legal director, who was responsible for many of the attempted cover-ups. Loveridge, right-hand man of chief executive Philip McGreevy, has been "off sick" since the decision was announced late last month.

Meanwhile Jeanette Antrobus, one of the officers guilty of forgery, has taken early retirement in a prime example of how to seriously cock up, avoid the consequences... and walk away with a load of dosh. Former personnel director Antrobus was responsible for an unlawful £21,000 pay-off to the manager of an old folks' home, Jean MacFarlane (*Eye* 1004). Counsel brought in to report on the matter concluded that Antrobus was responsible for "fabricated documents" and "sham arrangements". But before the report was presented to councillors it was itself doctored and toned down by Loveridge (*Eye* 1018) to make Antrobus appear in a better light.

Antrobus was suspended, had her case considered by a secret appeal committee, was reinstated — and promoted to human resources director. But seeing which way the wind was blowing, she took sick leave earlier this year. She has recently negotiated a £80,000 lump sum pay-off on top of a £26,000 pa pension. Not bad for a woman in her early 40s whose sole claim to fame is her skill as a forger – but still not quite good enough. Antrobus, we learn, is now suing Flintshire for "personal injury" caused by the stress of the whole affair.

● **COMPETITION is hotting up for Rotten Boroughs' coveted brass-necked councillor of the year award. Favourite is Lincolnshire county council leader Jim Speechley (*Eyes passim*), condemned by an auditor's report for bullying colleagues and creating a "climate of fear" and at the centre of a police investigation into how his council came to award a £5.5m computer contract to a firm on which his chum John Hayes MP sat as a director. Even Speechley's spineless Tory colleagues now want this busted flush to quit, but he won't.**

HOOG'S YOUR FRIEND

EAST SUSSEX county council is supposedly too hard up to pay its share of vitally-needed flood defences (*Eye* 1044), and has decided to scrap its music libraries to save a few quid (1051). Yet it apparently has plenty of cash to spare to fight the corner of slum landlord and convicted killer Nicholas van Hoogstraten in his campaign against ordinary folk who want to go for a Sunday afternoon walk.

Unpaid fines and costs against van Hoogstraten's company Rarebargain, resulting from its refusal to remove obstructions from a public footpath near the madman's half-built mansion on his estate near Uckfield, amount to more than £90,000. The county council's statutory duty is to remove the obstructions, yet it has not done so — even though, since van Hoogstraten's conviction last month for the manslaughter of his former business partner, hired thugs no longer patrol his land.

Instead, ESCC has processed Rarebargain's application to move the 140-year-old right of way. When Kate Ashbrook, secretary of the open spaces society, challenged this in the courts East Sussex spent more than £16,000 fighting the case — many, many times the cost of clearing the path. The instinct of rural Tories to stand up for landowners, however vile, takes some shifting, it seems.

● **LINCOLNSHIRE'S Jim Speechley (see above) faces competition from former Stockport Lib-Dem councillor Neil Derbyshire, who pleaded guilty at Manchester crown court to an act of gross indecency with a 16-year-old boy in woods near the town. Despite having signed the sex offenders' register, he is still hanging on to his seat on the council pending sentencing on 16 August. At least by having quit the party, he has spared his wife Susan, also a Lib Dem councillor, the anguish of voting against him.**

LOST CAUSE

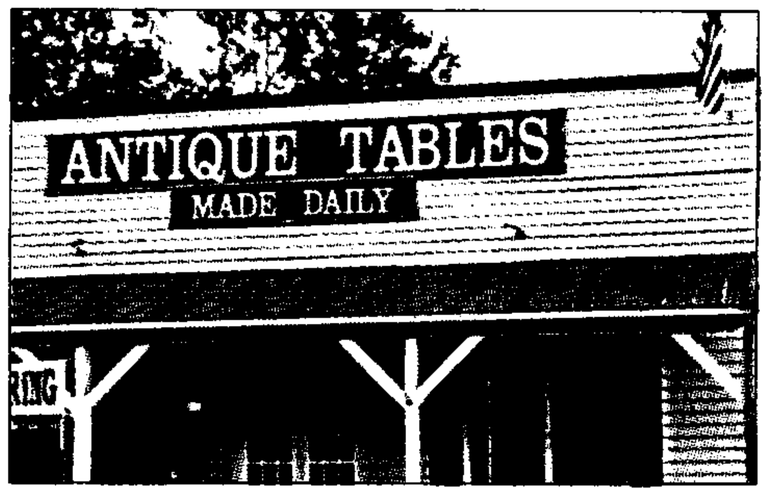
AUDITOR John Magill, the bane of Dame Shirley Porter's life, has been given the go-ahead by the audit commission to investigate a fresh raft of allegations about the way Lady Tesco orchestrated the homes-for-votes scandal (*Eyes passim*) when she was leader of Westminster council, 15 years ago. Since when, the battle between Porter and Magill has been unrelenting.

Earlier this year the commission wrote to Magill commending him for his "integrity", after Lady Tesco's supporters complained that he was biased. Dame Shirl, now retired and supposedly down to her last few shekels in Tel Aviv, is still trying to duck-and-dive her way out of paying the £27m surcharge imposed by the high court, by taking her case to the European courts.

The new raft of allegations throws further valuable light on exactly how far Porter was willing to go to "fix" elections in Westminster. Dodgy practices which Magill will investigate include:

- Preventing housing associations building in Westminster while simultaneously seeking nomination rights to housing association properties outside of the borough.
- The sale of a homeless hostel in a marginal ward.
- Marginal wards receiving money for environmental improvement over poorer, "not-one-of-us" wards.
- The cost of hiring expensive consultants whose job it was to disguise the unlawful gerrymandering as "building stable communities", under the designated sales policy.
- Exactly what level of assistance Magill will get from Westminster council remains to be seen. The omens are not good. Westminster has already told the audit commission that a lot of the evidence has been "lost".

I-SPY *Virginia, USA*



Submitted by Hugh Betteridge. £10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs. No transparencies.)*

OVER THE MOAN

ALREADY struggling with a massive overspend and more financial black holes than an Enron subsidiary, Bath and North East Somerset council (Banes) received a further blow last month when it was revealed that £200,000 had been spent dealing with complaints from just three individuals — two of whom are councillors.

Most of the cost arose from the council's apparent need to employ a specialist consultant to deal with letters from the complainants – a bargain at just £400 per day. Other spending was stoked up by the council's bizarre decision to launch a £50,000 disciplinary hearing against Cllr Peter Jovcic-Sas (*Eye* 1050) for not showing nuff respeck to the council's officers.

The second moaning Minnie is Cllr Malcolm Hanney who has angered officers and the ruling Lib Dem junta by asking awkward questions about Banes's budget-busting Spa scheme (*Eyes passim*).

Officers have now recommended that special procedures be put in place to cut down on the excessive costs involved in dealing with "vexatious complainants". Perhaps Banes will be the first council to introduce a "three gripes and you're out" policy.

● **AN OUTSIDER in the brass-neck stakes is Staffordshire councillor Dennis Heptonstall, who "jumped in a camper van and headed for Dover" last year with fellow Labour councillor Penny Perry (*Eye* 1039). The couple, who are both married, but not to each other, threw East Staffordshire council, where they had been respectively leader and deputy, into confusion with their sudden departure for an extended tour of Uganda. Happily the couple reappeared before six months had elapsed, so their council allowances were not cut off. Now Cllr Heptonstall's pals on the county council have confirmed him as chairman of a powerful new committee scrutinising the NHS. His Ugandan adventure is clearly a sensitive issue, however. He was led away from a charity football match the other day in a tired and emotional state after spotting a local hack who had written about the camper van escapade and loudly denouncing him as a "wanker".**

IT'S GRIM UP NORTH LONDON — KNIFE & PACKER

WHAT'S THAT STRANGE MUSIC COMING FROM THE STREET?
IT'S SCHOENBERG!
THAT'LL BE THE ISLINGTON ICE CREAM VAN
I'D LIKE A FROZEN FAIR TRADE BANANA ON A STICK AND A KUMQUAT "99", PLEASE.
VEGAN NUTMEG DELIGHT
ORGANIC DURIAN LOLLY
RHUBARB & ROSEWATER SYRUP

NOOKS and CORNERS

IS THIS column highlights a stream of individual outrages — the demolition of handsome buildings to make way for a road, say, or the addition of a coffee lounge to a medieval church — we are in danger of not seeing the wood for the trees. And the wood is becoming dark and dangerous.

It's increasingly clear the government is unlike any previous Labour administration in its enthusiasm for change and modernity combined with a studied lack of interest in anything historical. The heritage lottery is to be run down in favour of projects that push "social inclusion" while the autonomy of the national heritage memorial fund, which has saved so much for the nation over the last few decades, is under threat.

Nor does the government seem much enamoured of English Heritage which it seems to identify with the "forces of conservatism". This was clear over *last year's* public inquiry into Heron Tower, a damagingly tall commercial building designed by American architects which will gravely obstruct the remaining distant views of St Paul's Cathedral from the west. English Heritage was surely right to oppose this arrogant scheme, but it was attacked for obstructing commercial development and the right of our architectural establishment to express itself.

"Green light for Heron Tower" was the recent front-page headline in *Building Design* – "The floodgates have been opened for greater high-rise development in the City of London after Kohn Pederson Fox's 37-storey Heron Tower was... finally approved by deputy prime minister John Prescott, following an 18-month £11 million public inquiry" – while an editorial in *The Architects' Journal* was gleefully headed "Heralding Heron: the beginning of the end for heritage culture?" Much more — and even higher — is in the pipeline. How interesting it is to note that the chairman of CABE, the official Commission for the Built Environment which replaced the Royal Fine Arts Commission, is a knighted property developer.

THE government is also keen to promote more and larger airports — while "speeding up" the planning process so that objectors have little chance to impede the massive developments the government arrogantly insists are in the national interest.

Get ready for Terminal Six at Heathrow, along with a new runway which will require the demolition of two medieval churches, and make way for another runway at Stansted and the extinction of dozens of listed buildings. There may even be a new international airport at Cliffe near Rochester in North Kent, which will do away with another old church and many other historic buildings.

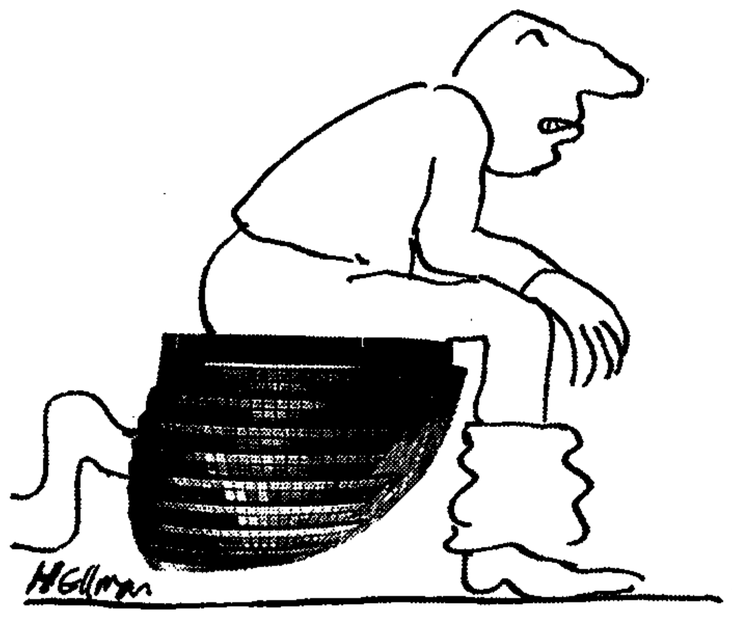
So what is English Heritage to do when faced with such massive assaults on our built heritage — let alone our increasingly precious rural landscape? It is probably no good just fighting for individual listed buildings: what needs to be questioned is the thinking behind the promotion of yet more airports.

Back in 1967, the late, lamented Olive Cook published* The Stansted Affair. A case for the people *when the then Labour government ignored the result of a public inquiry as well as public opinion in deciding to build London's third airport in rural Essex. In her conclusion, she wrote that the controversy "has focused the eyes of the entire nation on the threat of bureaucracy to our cherished way of life and to the threat of ill-planned technology to our irreplaceable heritage of natural and architectural beauty. It will not be so easy in the future to violate the rights of the people in the name of what is wrongly called progress." But she was wrong: a third of a century on, under "new" Labour, it is.

'Piloti'

101 Uses for a City Hall

Designer toilet



SIGNAL FAILURES

Keeping up appearances

AFTER the collapse of Enron and WorldCom, many people have wondered if the same could happen in Britain. It already has.

Railtrack, desperate to disguise its true nature as a "boring old utility", followed the same philosophy of letting the accounts drive the company. WorldCom classified everyday spending as investment, which is just what Failtrack was doing in 1998 when *Eye* 960 reported: "Proof that new investment has not taken off under privatisation is the increasing amount of routine expenditure presented to the public as 'upgrading'. Pulling the wool over people's eyes is now the foundation of Railtrack policy."

Failtrack even listed investments by other organisations, without crediting them, to make its network management statement look better (*Eye* 920). It continued the deceit to the end; the official 2001-02 digest of rail trends shows increased investment after Failtrack's formation and the smallprint adds: "Railtrack now include expenditure in their capital account which would previously have been recorded as maintenance expenditure."

Redefining accounting terms wasn't enough on its own. Failtrack decided many of British Rail's activities as a boring old utility were incompatible with its accounting image, so out went most of the breakdown trains (*Eye* 885), several re-signalling schemes (920) and routine rail grinding (1014). A Failtrack code of practice in 1997 (*Eye* 977) said degraded signal cables could be "tolerated" provided they weren't disturbed, to "obviate the need for any accelerated action".

Failtrack called in American management consultancy McKinsey, which advised Enron on best practice for more than 10 years. McKinsey advised Failtrack to cut back even further on boring old renewals and replace rails and signals only when they were worn out (ie posing safety risks). Failtrack, by then almost bereft of engineering know-how at board level, was delighted to comply.

Even after a worn-out rail caused the Hatfield crash, keeping up accounting appearances was paramount. After recording its first loss, £534m, in 2000-01, Failtrack spent emergency maintenance money from the government on a dividend to try to convince financiers all was well.

A big difference between Failtrack and the American corporations which have come unstuck is that Failtrack was risk-free (for investors, although not for passengers). Its shareholders have been absolved from liabilities and are being compensated for their stupidity. It was their company and the directors they approved that botched the west-coast mainline renewal ("upgrade" in Failtrack-speak), where costs have now risen to £13bn from £2bn. Yet, as the *Eye* predicted in April, the shareholders aren't having to compensate train operators for the shambles. Instead taxpayers are giving Virgin an extra £106m, with the final settlement likely to involve more than £500m.

Some Failtrack shareholders think *they* have been conned. They say the government acted illegally last October and their shares should be worth £9 each rather than the 250p they'll get from taxpayers. But Failtrack shares had fallen to 280p on the open market when the private company was terminated in October. Had the shareholders been given 280p per share immediately, most would have invested the money in other shares whose value has now fallen. The compensation, on average, would now be worth just 221p per former Railtrack share.

Alternatively, had Railtrack continued as a plc it would have collapsed after the Potters Bar derailment in May. The engineers who lead Railtrack in administration responded calmly to the derailment because they understand the risk of points failures elsewhere. But Railtrack plc was led by accountants whose grasp of engineering risks was so weak they ordered 20mph limits, many of them unnecessary, at hundreds of places after Hatfield. That caused disruption unprecedented even in wartime, although only a small fraction of the track system was directly affected. After Potters Bar Railtrack plc would have placed speed restrictions on thousands of points and possibly put many out of use. The railway would have been paralysed, Railtrack would have sunk under the gigantic compensation claims and shareholders would have lost everything.

So 250p per share is a bloody good deal for Failtrack shareholders and the fund managers who put big money on the company. For everyone else, the refund is immoral and unjustified and will deprive the ailing rail network of £300m.

'Dr B. Ching'

New strategy to lock up public sector workers until after election

Times Online

YOUNG BRITISH ARTISTS

BY BIRCH

Anish is really pissed off! His idea was brilliant in its simplicity: imagine, in water, a huge, gleaming dome!
-NEWS-
DIANA MEMORIAL ART WORLD OUTRAGED AS AMERICAN BEATS BRITISH TURNER PRIZE WINNER
But for some reason, the Government were dead set against it...

Letters

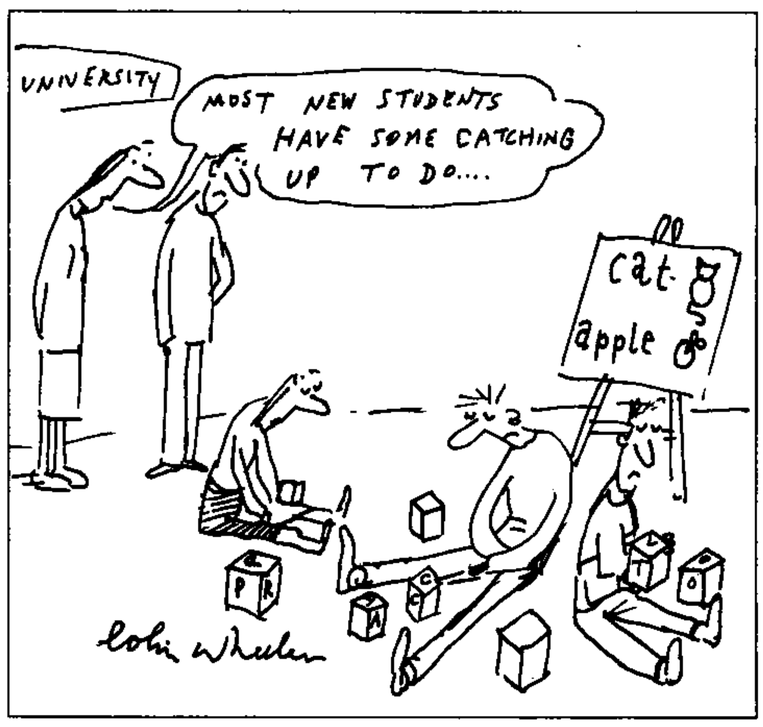
Bog standards

Sir,

Re Younger and wiser (Letters, 26 July). I knew what a logarithm was when I was 15 (1978). However, the maths teaching in our bog-standard comprehensive was dire. My friend and I failed our mock A-level maths exams, so our parents hired private tutors two hours a week. We ignored the teacher and instead did every A-level exam of the previous ten years. We passed with B grades. The rest of the class got D, E and F grades. Every year the government of the day brays on about the academic excellence of our young people. Presumably this is why so many UK jobs are in the high-powered service industries ("Do you want fries with that?")

Yours cynically,
PETER JONES,

Hull, East Yorkshire.



Funny peculiar

Sir,

Re Street of Shame's denouncement of the cartoonist Mac's work in the Daily Mail. Surely any amusement comes from the exaggeration of the event it is based on – the swapping of two babies of different colour. Mac's cartoon is funny (the degree is debatable) as the difference between a chimpanzee and a human child is hugely more obvious.

It's as simple as that. Before the Eye pours scorn, take a look at the "weakest link" cartoon in the very same issue. Why are big afros and the Ku Klux Klan funny and the MAC cartoon not?

If you want to slag off other people, you really must be whiter than white yourselves.

GARY MILLER,

Faversham, Kent.

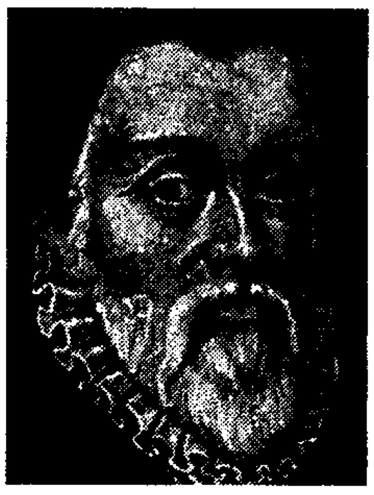
O·B·N

There were other leading businessmen of the postwar generation who transformed their own sectors, including John Sainsbury, Siegmund Warburg and, indeed, our own proprietor, Rupert Murdoch, with Wapping and satellite television.

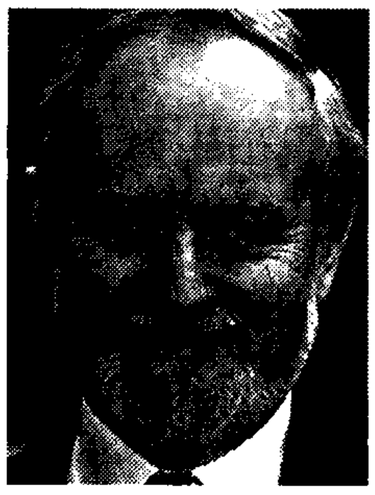
WILLIAM REES-MOGG
The Times

£10 paid for entries put forward for the Order of the Brown Nose.

Lookalike



Stilgoe



Tyndale

Sir,

Has anyone else spotted the resemblance between that witty funster and lyricist, William Tyndale, and the ancient curmudgeon, Richard Stilgoe?

Is there perchance a familial connection?

Yours in passing,
GLORIA MUNDI.

Edinburgh.

Amicus animus

Sir,

I am surprised at the errors in your report on page 6 about the AEEU-Amicus.

1. The headquarters of the union cannot possibly be in "Bromley, Kent" because there is no such place. Bromley is in London.

2. The previous union name was not "EEPTU" but "EETPU". I am surprised that you have deviated from your usual practice of referring to it by its very clever acronym, "Eat Poo".

Yours pedantically,
JOHN S. CARTWRIGHT,

Croydon.

Take a pew

Sir,

Piloti's concern for St Mary's Long Stratton (Eye 1059) is understandable but misplaced.

Church buildings did not have pews in the early middle ages, thus allowing a more intuitive approach to worship reminiscent of Islam and far eastern faiths today. Pews represent the stifling regimentation of worship which began at the deformation, sorry reformation, and from which all our churches are still suffering to their cost – and almost all of them seem blithely unaware of it.

Were I the incumbent of St Mary's, I would have no hesitation in removing pews if I thought them an interference to the purpose for which the church was built. A church is not a museum.

Yours etc,
S. SHARPLES,

Via email.

Dot con

Sir,

Regarding your "Literary Review" (1058) wherein your writer makes remarks about a group of journalists in which group he includes John Cassidy (Dot.con). Your writer states: "It goes without saying that they are much the same crowd who inflated the dot.com bubble until it burst."

Well, it does not go without saying, and it doesn't go very well with saying either. John Cassidy wrote numerous articles published during that time in the New Yorker magazine pointing out very plainly and eloquently that this was a bubble. He said it so frequently and so loudly that it must have seemed like an echo. He furnished at one point as an illustration a graph of the stock performance of radio in the 20s (just before the great crash) juxtaposed with a nearly identical graph of AOL in the 90s (just before guess what).

Regards,
DONNA KELLY,

Dublin.

Points of View Finder

Sir,

View Finder's otherwise excellent observations about the dumbing down of the arts (Eye 1059) were spoiled by the conclusion which made me ashen-faced with anger and incandescent with rage.

Brian Wilson was rightly compared to Mozart when he first wrote and produced Pet Sounds in 1966 at the tender age of 23, and there is now broad agreement that the music he composed during the Pet Sounds/Smile period surpasses the work of artists View Finder admires. Furthermore, Mark Lamarr managed to coax Brian Wilson into giving his most articulate and revealing interview yet. Brian Wilson is still a tortured genius as well as being a shy, modest and decent bloke. View Finder should listen to Pet Sounds, either the original 1966 version, or the recent live at the Royal Festival Hall offering. It would turn his/her life around.

ANDREW MARTIN,

Via email.

Sir,

Can you clarify why I should be appalled that The Beach Boy's Pet Sounds should appear in a series entitled "Art That Shook The World" (Eye TV, 1059)? If View Finder weren't such a dried-up old fart, he might appreciate why Pet Sounds is venerated by so many, and the effect it had, and continues to have, on rock music. Moreover, Mark Lamarr has a considerable depth of knowledge regarding rock and pop, and was undeserving of the sneer.

Otherwise, carry on.

Regards,
FRASER MARSHALL,

Via email.

Sir,

Though View Finder (Eye 1059) is right to criticise Vivaldi Unmasked, it's worth pointing out that other BBC music documentaries are much better than this. In the Masterworks series broadcast on BBC2 earlier this year, Michael Berkeley and other respected musicians discussed four 20th-century masterpieces in some detail, followed by complete performances of the works. The programmes assumed that viewers were interested in the subject, so we were spared gimmicky camerawork or contrived populist references.

We can only hope that future documentaries follow the example of Masterworks rather than Vivaldi Unmasked.

Yours faithfully,
ROB HARRIES,

Aberdare, Mid Glamorgan.

Sir,

Thank you thank you thank you TV Eye for your timely savaging of Charles Hazlewood's Vivaldi Unmasked, quite easily the most awful arts programme I have ever seen on BBC1. I only hope for the sake of his/her health that View Finder hasn't been watching the Proms, where this doyen of the dumbed down continues to ply his trade on a nightly basis. After Elgar's In The South he asked his studio guests if they thought Elgar would have written film scores, quote "had cinema been up and running." Elgar died in 1934. I'll leave readers to fill in the gaps. Who is this tool? And where did he rise without trace from? I think you owe it to us to keep track of him.

ROB CHAPMAN,

Via email.

Sir,

Your wondering whether the BBC is going to make films about (Busoni's) Flight of the Bumble Bee (Eye TV, Eye 1059) reminds me that the late and great Hermione Gingold did actually do an analysis of it, in the persona of a serious-minded German musicologist – "And do ve, in zat phwase, hear ze tiniest echo of Mozart? NO, we do not!" I doubt the BBC can do better.

Yours,
DESMOND DONOVAN,

Via email.

Scenes You Seldom See (16)

"Lost again – and nothing to blame but my own poor judgement"

A Vicious Circle

Sir,

Re: my novel, A Vicious Circle, and the inaccurate identification of the novel's "louche and revolting" literary editor as John Walsh.

Firstly, John Walsh has always addressed me with propriety, and has borne his colleagues' jibes as to the inspiration for Ivo Sponge with grace and good humour. No doubt when Ivo Sponge reappears in my next novel, Love in Idleness, as a model of charm, this identification will immediately cease.

Secondly, Percy Flage is a character so minor as to be given two lines of dialogue, and is emphatically not based on Andrew Motion, with whom I have no acquaintance, nor any conceivable quarrel.

Thirdly, it is tiresome to find that "literary types", in their eagerness for self-promotion or something nastier, continue, six years after A Vicious Circle was published by 4th Estate, to make up this kind of fiction. The fact that they lack the talent for any other kind is insufficient excuse for it being disseminated by your organ.

Yours,
AMANDA CRAIG,

Via email.

TWO ATTRACTIVE escorts available. First class service with a smile, desecration assured open till late.

Evening Herald

Poetic justice

Sir,

Far be it from me to call myself meritorious, but I would like to point out a few things in relation to your recent piece – "Poets Cornered" – about the Forward Prize.

1. I am a woman.

2. I do not publish with Picador. My publisher is The Gallery Press in Ireland.

3. I have never met Sean O'Brien or Gerry Wardle.

4. I have met Don Paterson and Michael Donaghy only once, briefly and unexceptionally.

5. I happen to be the fifth shortlisted poet for this year's Forward Prize for Best Collection.

Yours sincerely,
VONA GROARKE,

Dundalk, Co. Louth.

Splitting hairs

Sir,

Matt O'Donnell is doubly incorrect in his assertion that "Spanish women win the 'Hairy Woman' contest hands down". Italian women win it hands (and arms) up.

Yours faithfully,
TIMOTHY R.P. BROWN,

Bearsden, Glasgow.

Patently wrong

Sir,

You claim in your piece about the award of a CBE to Gillian Samuels of Pfizer that the European Biotechnology Patents Directive "allows firms to copyright parts of living plants, animals and humans." Of course patents and copyright are two completely different things. The directive concerned the former but not the latter.

So congratulations on confusing the public about intellectual property. It's really not that difficult – all right it is, which is why my esteemed profession can go on charging £300 an hour for advice.

I remain, Sir, your obedient servant,
ASTLEY VAUGH,

Chartered Patent Agent and Senior Partner, Woolverton & Vaugh, London.

Hart less?

Sir,

*I read the article "Great Barrier Grief" with increasing incredulity. Mr Conway thinks that the real and **sole responsibility** (my emphasis) lies with the highways agency, because its barrier was unable to cope with Mr Hart's recklessness.*

The investigation into this crash, which was hindered by Mr Hart who said that "it (his car) just swerved left", established that he had not slept for 37 hours prior to the crash and that in the one-hour drive to Great Heck he must have disregarded speed limits. The nuclear safety (?) man Mr Conway doesn't regard this as culpable? Would he accept this behaviour from nuclear plant operators?

You then go on to the topic of risk assessments. Do you think Mr Hart made a risk assessment of his behaviour before setting out? I think he might have made an informal one in which he concluded that in most likely crashes he would be "driving" the largest vehicle and would therefore be all right.

Mr Hart has acted purely in his own interest all the way through this, driving while unfit, exceeding speed limits, denying and then attempting to divert blame, first on to the vehicle and then on to the road. His only interest in the crash barrier is to use it to get himself out of jail early. He continues to act solely in his own interest showing no remorse and having learned nothing. He would be as great a menace to the general public on his release as he was before.

If Mr Hart, Mr Conway or yourselves are truly concerned with road safety and want the barrier extended I suggest you or they found the "Hartballs" fund to pay for it.

There is only one area in which Mr Hart has a proper grievance. If he had struck another vehicle or a pedestrian or indeed anything other than a train he would have likely got a lesser sentence or not even been charged even if he had caused multiple deaths.

DAVID MULLEN,

Daventry.

Miller's Crossing

Sir,

Ever a devotee of your esteemed organ, I yet wonder if it's altogether fair to snipe at script consultancies who "tout for cash from gullible, often hopeless hopefuls when a reputable and conscientious agent... would offer the same critical service for free..." (Books & Bookmen, Eye 1059). Publishers, theatres and production organisations employ batteries of professional readers to hurl at writers. Should not the writer be able to access the same level of critical service? Often their only alternative is a rejection slip telling them nothing of use. Similarly, busy agents may not have the time to spend on exhaustive and constructive critiques. So there!

Ever devotedly (as stated),
BRIAN MILLER PhD,

Scripts Success Online, Bristol.

Commonwealthballs

£10 paid for contributions

"The Commonwealth Games will be the biggest sporting event since September 11th."
Classic FM News
(Peter Ludlam)

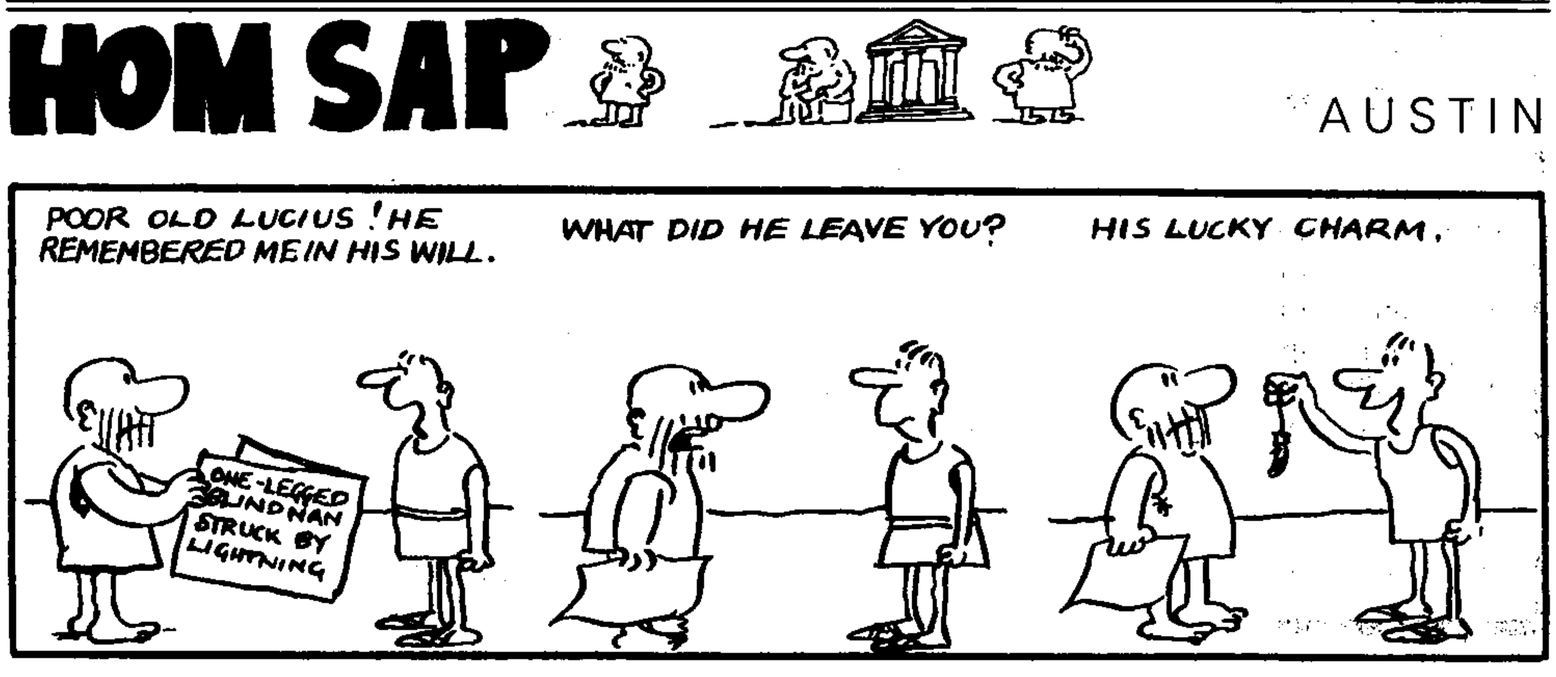
"Most of these athletes will have a favourite lead leg, which is either left or right."
MIKE WHITTINGHAM, Radio 5 Live
("Andyc100")

"That completes the heats of the 200 metres, as they say in the Eurovision Song Contest."
RUSSELL FULLER, Radio 5 Live
(Paul Peverall)

"We are hoping that our swimmers are going to do something big in the pool."
DIANE MODAHL, BBC Manchester
(Tom Curry)

"England could not have had a better start – a silver medal for Tony Ally in the diving."
Channel 4 News
(Dominic Birch)

"There will be 5000 competitors on the pitch, including, of course, the Queen..."
MIKE BUSHELL, BBC News 24
("JC")


HOM SAP
AUSTIN
POOR OLD LUCIUS! HE REMEMBERED ME IN HIS WILL.
WHAT DID HE LEAVE YOU?
HIS LUCKY CHARM.
ONE-LEGGED BLIND MAN STRUCK BY LIGHTNING

Letter from **Buenos Aires**
from Our Own Correspondent

AS foreign banks and investors join the stampede to abandon a once proud but now destitute nation, our usually gregarious politicians, who have done so much to bring Argentina to where it is today, have become curiously shy and retiring.

Eduardo Duhalde is our fifth president in a year but his enthusiasm for the job is such that he has brought forward elections by six months. Few people seem over-keen to replace him. In his own Peronist party, that terribly nice former motor racing driver Carlos Reutemann prefers to potter along as a provincial governor rather than throw his helmet into the ring for the presidency. Other possible candidates are equally wary.

The reason? Any aspiring hopeful for next March's election knows they will have to do all the dirty work the current government is busily avoiding. At the moment our banking system is being kept afloat by the simple measure of not allowing us to get our money out. At some point this is going to have to change – it has already been declared illegal by the courts – and when it does, all the money flowing into the economy will bring back inflation in the hundred if not thousand percents, while the rest will be on a one-way trip out of the country.

There is one man though who thinks he can save us: the man whom many accuse of getting us into this mess in the first place, the Peronist leader Carlos Menem. He was in power throughout the 1990s and sees the current crisis as the perfect opportunity to win back the presidency. Unfortunately, he is loathed by President Duhalde and about half the Peronist party, who do not bother to hide the fact.

In the past few weeks the in-fighting has been dirty. A provincial governor who backs Duhalde sent a gang of 400 thugs to trash the house of an MP who belongs to the Menem faction. Other possible Peronist candidates for the November primary say they have received death threats to persuade them to withdraw. And the smears about the former president, who was always accused of corruption and misuse of public funds, are now flowing thick and fast.

Perhaps the most extraordinary is the accusation that Menem took $10m from the Iranian authorities to keep quiet about Iranian involvement in a 1994 bombing in a Jewish centre in Buenos Aires which killed 85 people. No perpetrator has ever been caught, and an alleged former Iranian agent has now claimed he had evidence that the bribe had been paid to the former Argentine head of state to "bury" the evidence that the Iranian-backed Hezbollah group was behind the atrocity.

Menem has strenuously denied the accusation and threatened to sue. But while he was defending himself against these charges he let slip something that could be potentially far more dangerous. Denying he had Swiss bank accounts holding $10m, he admitted he did have an account there with some $650,000 in it.

He says the money came from an indemnity he was paid for being imprisoned as a Peronist during the military dictatorships that ruled Argentina from 1976-1984. The problem is that he never declared the money on any of the asset statements he was required to give each year during his presidency. Nor has he explained how his personal wealth in those years appears to have grown from almost nothing to more than $2m.

He still faces allegations that he took a huge cut on arms deals that saw weapons ending up in Croatia and Ecuador, despite United Nations bans on such sales. Menem spent five months under house arrest last year while the case was investigated. Like all the others, it has yet to come to court. In the meantime Menem presses on with his bid to return to the presidential palace with his new wife, a former beauty queen from Chile. His answer to our economic woes? He has said we should officially adopt the US dollar as our currency. At least he should have enough of them.

FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

● "Even if the enemy carries out its threat to bomb us with nukes, we don't have to panic," Radheshyam Gupta told a press conference in Lucknow, "because we have sacred cows to help us. You can fully protect yourself from nuclear fallout by covering the roof of your house with cow dung. And applying sacred cow dung paste to your body from head to toe will serve as an extra shield."

Gupta, a spokesman for the Uttar Pradesh Cow Protection Commission, was speaking as tensions with Pakistan over the status of Kashmir threatened to escalate into a full-scale conflict. "Our commission's primary mission is to prevent the slaughter of gaumata, the mother cow, which all Hindus regard as holy. But we also promote sacred cow products like urine and dung, which have powerful medicinal properties. Ordinary people cannot afford expensive protective clothing against radiation, so they need to be informed that sacred cow dung will protect them against nuclear fallout, and also from radiation burns. And luckily we have a limitless supply of sacred cow dung in this part of India."

The RSS (Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, a powerful Hindu nationalist organisation) has given its backing to the campaign, but scientists remained sceptical. "Sure, if the bomb drops, you can cover yourself in cow shit if you want to," said one, "but you're going to die anyway." *(Navyug [India], 24/6/02. Spotter: Brian Ewen)*

—●—

● *"Shepparton is just a normal provincial town, no different to any other town," Ray Sharawara told reporters gathered in the lobby of his hotel, the Goulburn Valley. "We owners of licensed premises already have to pay nearly $30,000 a year in local taxes, so why should we have to fork out another $3,000 for this so-called Vandalism and Vomit tax? It's a disgrace." Sharawara was speaking on behalf of Shepparton's publicans, who are incensed by the local council's decision to impose an extra cleaning-up tax on all owners of licensed premises which remain open between 3am and 6am. "They're accusing us of being responsible for litter, vandalism, and human wastes such as vomit, urination, and defecation," he explained, "but that isn't fair. Sure, some of our customers use the street like a lavatory now and again, but that happens twenty-four hours a day, not just in the middle of the night. So why should all-night licensees have to pay more than everyone else?"*

But Shepparton's deputy mayor, Anne McCamish, was unrepentant. "Pubs and clubs have had eighteen months' warning of the Vandalism and Vomit tax, and it's obvious that most of the street cleaning we require is due to the after-effects of late-night partying. When I walk down the streets in the early morning, they're covered in the kind of stuff that I don't want to tread in, or even see, especially vomit and doodees. At the moment, shopkeepers have to clean it up, and they complain bitterly to us, so we're just ensuring that those who are responsible foot the bill." (AAP [Australia], 3/7/02. Spotter: Rhonda Palmer)

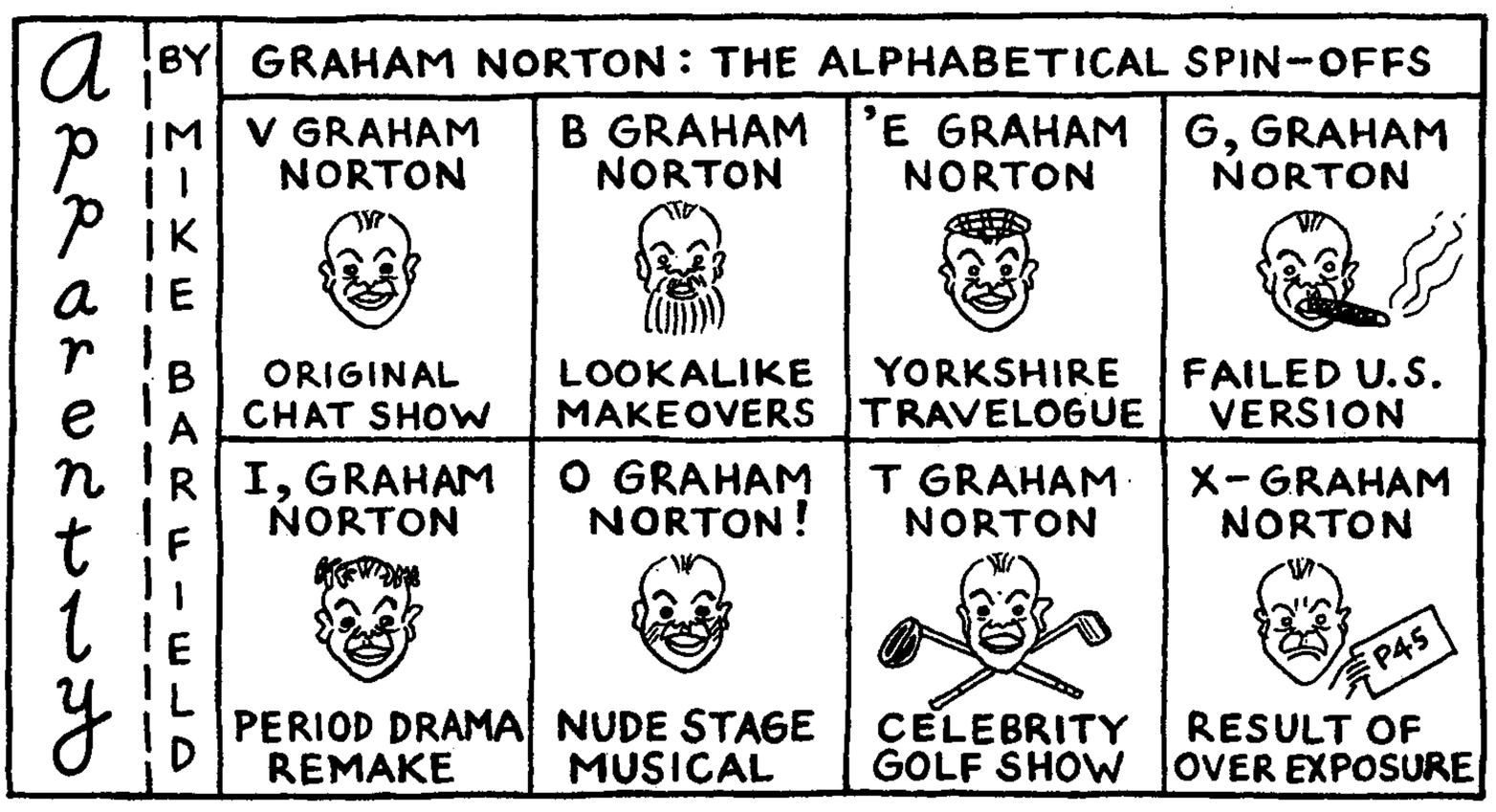
—●—

● "If you're out walking with your partner and you see the pink taxi, then why not hail it?" Roman Osica asked listeners while presenting his programme on Poland's RMF radio station. "It will take you anywhere you want to go in Warsaw, absolutely free of charge, and there is only one stipulation. During the journey, you and your partner must have full sexual intercourse on the back seat."

Osica was describing the sex-on-wheels experience, a project devised by a twenty-six-year-old Swedish artist who is studying at the Warsaw Academy of Art. "The artist wants to

spread love around our city, so he used his bursary to import a London cab, and spray it bright pink. He also fitted tinted black glass to the rear windows, and added soft upholstery to the back seat, so that couples would feel comfortable and have an extra feeling of intimacy. The driver expects no payment, and anyone can ride in the taxi completely free, but they must have sex, and there must be two people at all times. Straight or gay, it doesn't matter, but solo masturbation doesn't count, and erectile failure among couples will result in the full fare being payable.

"The pink cab has been a great success so far, and the good people of Warsaw have been making reservations in it for several weeks. But if you see it driving along the street with its for hire light on, and you fancy a quickie, then why not wave it down? However, colour-blind couples might be wise to get confirmation from a third party that the taxi really is as pink as they believe it to be." *(RMF Radio News [Poland] 8/7/02. Spotter: David J. Baird)*



ST ALBION PARISH NEWS

Incumbent: Rev. A.R.P. Blair MA (Oxon)

Hullo,

Or perhaps I should say "bonjour", since Cherie and I and the kids are taking a well-earned break in the beautiful French village of Oubliez-la-Guerre!

And before our friend from Tesco's pipes up to ask "Who's paying for the vicar's holiday this time?", let me tell him, "Well, I suppose the answer, strictly speaking, is 'you are, matey!'".

Because that's what happens when people in the parish kick up a silly fuss about the vicar's foreign friends allowing him and his family to stay free of charge in their agreeable large houses on the continent! *I have to spend my salary on holidays and end up needing a pay rise or an increased pension settlement from the parish funds!*

I won't make any secret of the fact that I have been pretty upset in the past when people have carped about my family taking holiday in places like the Palazzo Fribi in Tuscany or the Chateau du Payer-Rien in the south of France.

The truth is I was only trying to save the parish money when I took up these generous offers. Honestly, that was my only motive!

And what thanks did I get for my parsimony on the parish's behalf? (From the Latin "parsimonious", meaning to "pass" the bill to someone other than "us" – look it up!)

Well, I'll tell you what thanks I got!

None at all. Just a lot of sneering and sniping from all those sad little people in the parish whose only idea of a holiday is something that they have to pay for themselves!

And although I don't want to seem obsessed with holidays, can I just nail another lie that seems to have gained hold in the Britannia Arms and the Working Men's Club over the pints of Prescott's bitter and packets of Sainsbury's GM-flavoured tomato-flavoured fish scratchings! I am not too snobby to take my holidays in Britain, as they

would have you believe.

Just before we came to France, Cherie and I and the kids enjoyed a wonderful two hours driving round the Lake District on our way to Heathrow, and it was glorious!

We met some really interesting people on our visit, including some keen photographers who had somehow found out from Mr Campbell that we were visiting a place called St Bores and took the trouble to come all the way from London to join us there!

So let's hear no more about how the Vicar doesn't enjoy the real England, or the countryside!

But, as I say, I don't want to dwell on my holidays for the whole of this letter. Nevertheless, I would be failing in my duty as your vicar, if I didn't pass on what a joy it has been visiting France this summer, to use their new currency, the euro.

When one uses these new coins, one gets a real sense of people putting the past behind and marching together in a spirit of friendship and unity towards the future!

I may be on holiday, but sitting outside the village burger bar the other night, so that Leo could sample some of the local "Grand Mac et Frites à porter", I composed a new chorus which I hope we can try out at Evensong (and perhaps have a 'referendum' on whether we should add it to our permanent repertoire!).

Chorus

They've got the eu-ro-o in their hands
They've got the eu-ro-o in their hands
They've got the eu-ro-o in their hands
Isn't it time that we had too! (Repeat).

Au revoir, votre ami,

Antoine!

The Vicar and Cherie hugely enjoyed the St Albion's Athletics Day held outside(!) last week and they particularly liked the Coronation anthem "Vivat Reggae" sung by all the runners at the closing ceremony to a hip-hop beat – a wonderful fusion of old and new, traditional and modern, pivotal and relevant in a very real sense. A.C.

A Notice from Mr Prescott, acting-vicar-in-charge

Since Tony has left me to run the parish in his absence on another of his jaunts round the continent, may I inform all parishioners that I have taken the following action – *viz* all areas of under-utilised open space belonging to the church, e.g. the churchyard, the bowling green, the pitch-and-putt course, the St Albion's school sports field, the convalescent garden of the St Albion's Hospice and the field behind the bus garage which we normally rent out for allotments (Gaitskell's Meadow), have all been sold to developers for much-needed low-cost housing.

Any parishioners interested in purchasing these very attractive and affordable homes, set in formerly rolling countryside, would be looking in the region of £450,000-£600,000. I would even be tempted to buy one myself, if I didn't have four homes already! J.P.

• PARISH LIFE •

In the absence of the Vicar, Mr Brown, the Treasurer, has very kindly allowed this portrait of himself by local artist Mr de la Nougerede to appear. He modestly suggested that it be titled 'Prudence' or 'Virtue Rewarded' (which is, of course, a reference to all the virtuous teachers and doctors and nurses in the parish and is not meant to suggest that anyone else will one day be rewarded for all his hard work!). G.B.

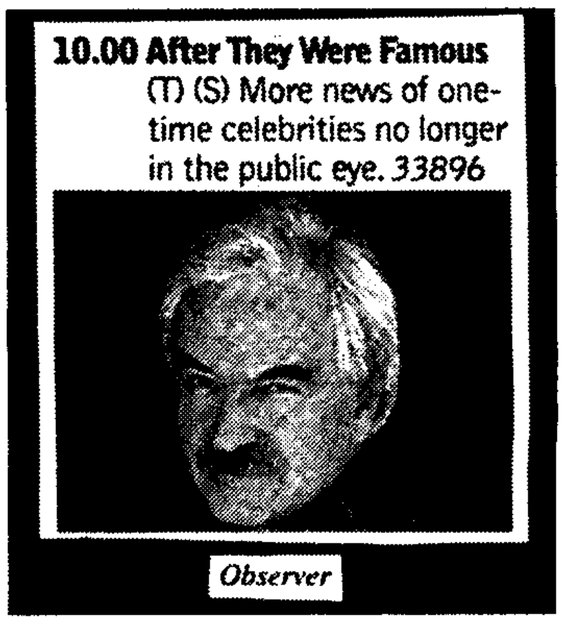
A Taxi Driver Writes

Every week a well-known cab driver is invited to comment on an issue of topical importance.

THIS WEEK: **Normo Tebbs** (cab no. 764321) on Homosexuality in the Conservative Party".

Gor blimey! See all that fuss about the Tory shirtlifter? Who gives a toss! What 'e does in his private life is his business, or maybe just his psychiatrist's ha ha ha! No, no. Live and let live, that's what I say obviously but them Tories are finished unless they get back to the real issues that the punters are interested in – ie, whether poofs should be strung up. I mean, it's the only language they understand, isn't it? Same with all them Muslim lesbian asylum seekers – you know the type, guv.

I 'ad that Simon Heffer in the back of the cab once. Very clever man.



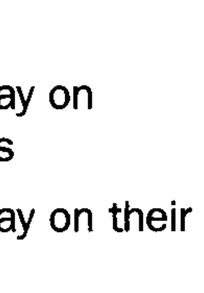
Parenting

Exclusive to all newspapers

7 Fun Modern Ways To Entertain Your Children During The Summer Holidays

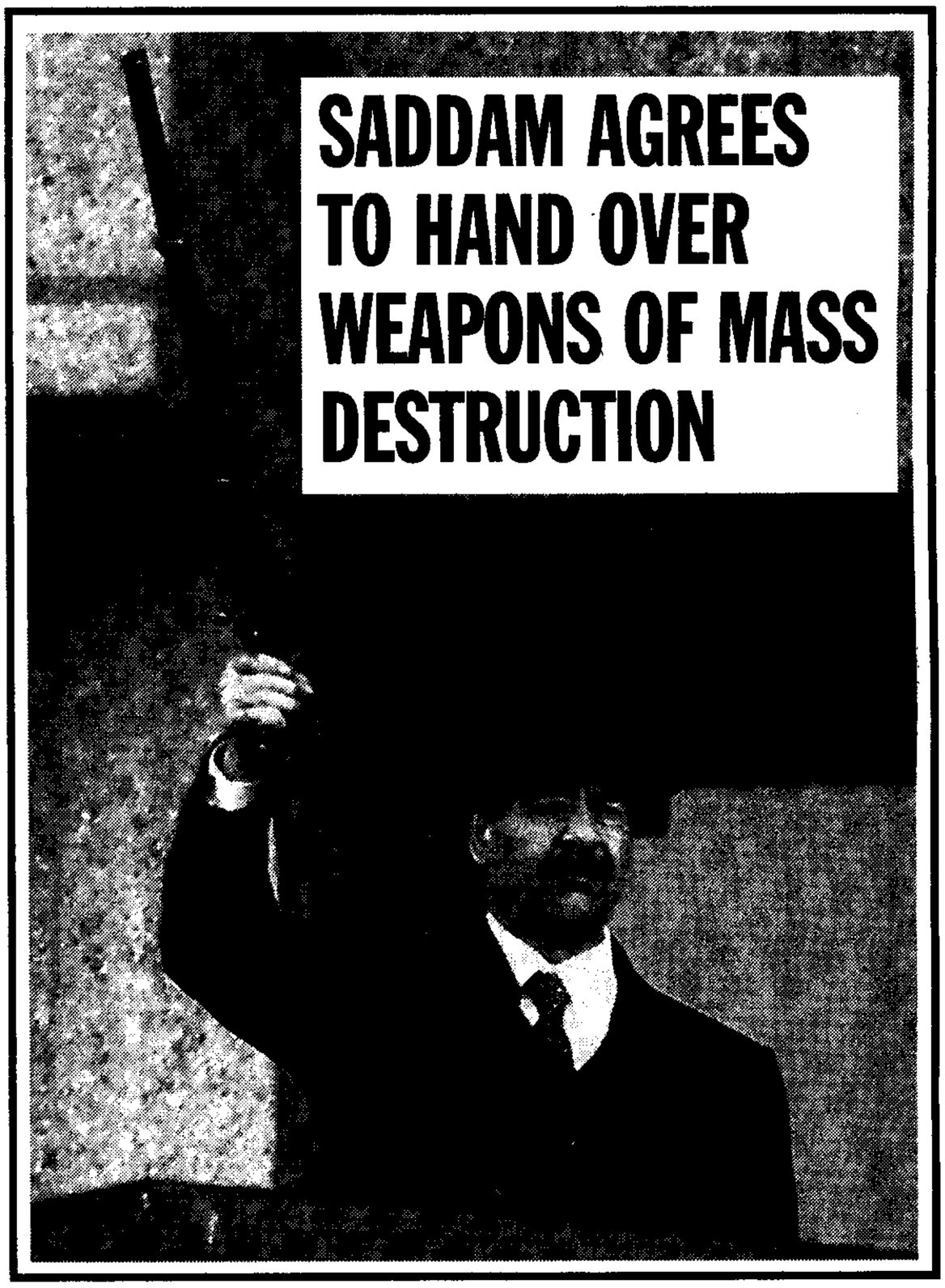
1. Tell them to play on their Gameboys
2. Tell them to play on their Playstations
3. Tell them to play on their mobile phones
4. Tell them to play on their computers
5. Tell them to watch television
6. Tell them to go to bed
7. Er...
8. That's it.

A Doctor Writes



AS A doctor, I'm often asked if I'd like a job working in NHS admin, even though my career is over after being struck off in disgrace for malpractice. The simple answer is "Yes of course – as long as you throw in a parking space."

What happens is that the doctor, ie myself, is asked to *(cont p.94)*



MICKEY MOUSE ATTACKS ARCHBISHOP

by Our Religious Staff **Rowan Pelling**

MICKEY MOUSE, the leader of one of the world's major religions, yesterday hit out at the Archbishop of Canterbury, The Rt. Rev. Rowan Atkinson, calling him "a bad influence on children" and part of "an international, globalised organisation encouraging conformity".

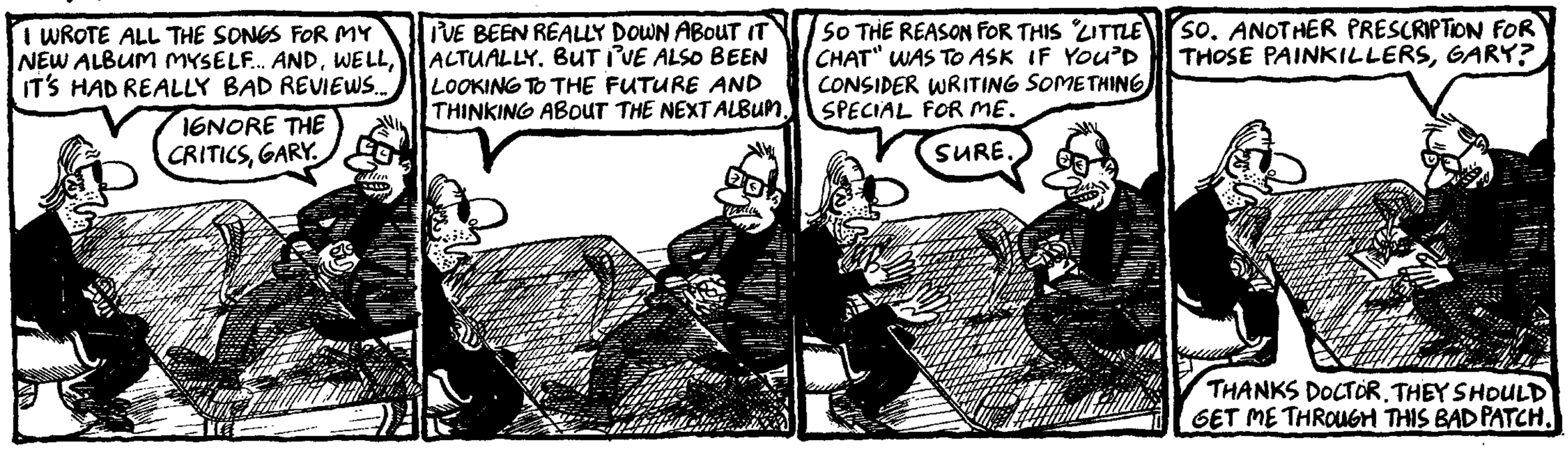
"Millions of children," he squeaked, "are brainwashed with fairy stories about good and evil and are taught by their parents to believe in happy endings.

Church Mouse

"Instead of taking their children to theme parks on Sundays, and spending their money, parents are encouraged to go to church and (continued p94).

Celeb

LIGGER


I WROTE ALL THE SONGS FOR MY NEW ALBUM MYSELF... AND, WELL, IT'S HAD REALLY BAD REVIEWS...
IGNORE THE CRITICS, GARY.
I'VE BEEN REALLY DOWN ABOUT IT ACTUALLY. BUT I'VE ALSO BEEN LOOKING TO THE FUTURE AND THINKING ABOUT THE NEXT ALBUM.
SO THE REASON FOR THIS "LITTLE CHAT" WAS TO ASK IF YOU'D CONSIDER WRITING SOMETHING SPECIAL FOR ME.
SURE.
SO. ANOTHER PRESCRIPTION FOR THOSE PAINKILLERS, GARY?
THANKS DOCTOR. THEY SHOULD GET ME THROUGH THIS BAD PATCH.

Edinburgh Highlights

The six fringe hits you won't want to miss

by Our Arts Staff **Sue Dough**

Don Giovanni – Opera Norwich's reworking of the Mozart classic (Venue No. 42,734) sets it on board the QE2.

Theatre

Macbeth

St Columba's Caravan Park. Venue No. 738

ALL NUDE Ukranian production takes Shakespeare's masterpiece and sets it on the moon in the year 3037. An outstanding performance as Lady Macbeth by the acclaimed Serge Bonkov.

"A lunar tour de force" – Big Issue

Film

Moose!

The Ritzy. Venue 78,408

AWARD-WINNING Canadian director Annette de la Nougerede tells the story of a young Taliban asylum seeker who is befriended by two lesbian lorry drivers in a subarb of Quebec. Stars Hamad Hamas as himself.

"Heartwarming, magical cinema though perhaps seven hours was a little long" – Sheridan Morley

Jazz

Men with Beards

The Sad Café. Venue 9,336

ALL star line-up of men with beards including Chris Beaver, Ronnie Whiskers, Gary Goatee and new star Courtney Moustache.

"Mmmm... nice" – Beards and Beardsmen

Comedy

The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary Show

BT Phone and Internet Centre, The Royal Mile. Venue No. 3,712

TOP Irish stand-up Peter O' Touretz goes through the dictionary picking out the swear words.

"The endless repetition of expletives is both disturbing and hysterical" – Time Out

Dance

Les Trois Chiens de Limoges

Starbucks Café, Princes Street. Venue No. 979

AMAZING all-dog ballet company perform works by Bach, Wolfhound Mozart and Sir Harrison Dogwhistle.

"Ballet at its best" – Radio 3's Late Junction

Art

Orkney Visions

The Cartier Bresson Room, Caledonian Hotel. Venue 10,2473

Gritty black and white images of Orkney fisher folk, from the nineteen thirties to the present day, by one of Scotland's most neglected photographers Hamish MacApple.

"MacApple's landscapes have a resonance at once nostalgic and contemporary" – Woman's Hour *(That's enough Festival, Ed.)*

FILM CENSOR – 'Children Should Not Watch Pornography'

by Our Media Staff **P.G. Titz**

THE NEW film censor, Sir Quentin Thomas, has outraged the film business by suggesting that "young children should probably not watch sexually violent scenes on the screen".

Said one outraged spokesman for the cinema community, "This is a return to the dark ages before Andreas Whittam Stiff."

This was a reference to Sir Quentin Thomas' predecessor who was widely respected by film makers as a necessary liberalising force in their industry.

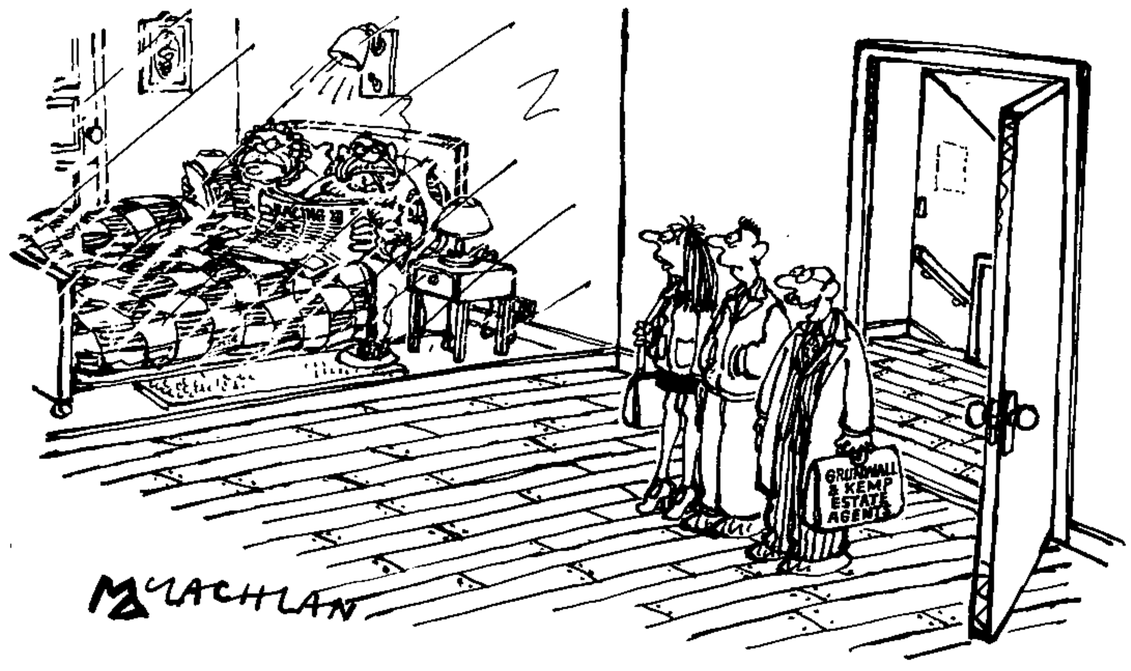
The spokesman continued, "Cinematic art needs the widest possible audience and to suggest that pornography is only suitable for so-called adults is a terrible restriction on the basic freedom of the artist to make as much money as *(continued p. 94)*

I was appalled and dismayed by your correspondent's attack upon the spherically challenged. We may be bigger people, but we still have feelings.

William B Unter, by email

Daily Telegraph

YES, – IT'S GOLF WAR



"Well, you must expect quite thin walls with houses in this price range"

'YES, I AM USELESS' Admits Top Tory

by Our Political Staff **Matthew Gay-Paree**

THE WORLD of Westminster was rocked to its foundations last night when a senior Conservative, Mr Alan Duncan Smith, admitted in an interview that he was "useless" and had been for years.

"For a long time," he said, "I tried to keep it secret. But then I realised that things had changed and that in the 21st century it was perfectly acceptable to be useless and to be a politician.

"Labour have realised this for years, and have been prepared to promote lots of useless people up to Cabinet level.

"It is time that the Tories realised that it is no longer a stigma to be useless, and that a lot of well-known Tories have been useless without it hindering their careers.

Jeremy Thorpedo

"I think people's attitudes really have changed. An old lady in my constituency came up to me the other day and said, 'Alan, I always suspected that you were useless. But now that you have come out and admitted it, I really admire your bravery.' "

Alan Duncan Smith is 37.

Eye Probe

PAST TORIES: Were They Useless?

Edward Heath

There were repeated rumours around Westminster during his premiership that he was useless, but he has never publicly admitted it.

Michael Portillo

Knowing that many journalists were on his trail and were about to expose him for being useless, he "outed" himself and gave up politics.

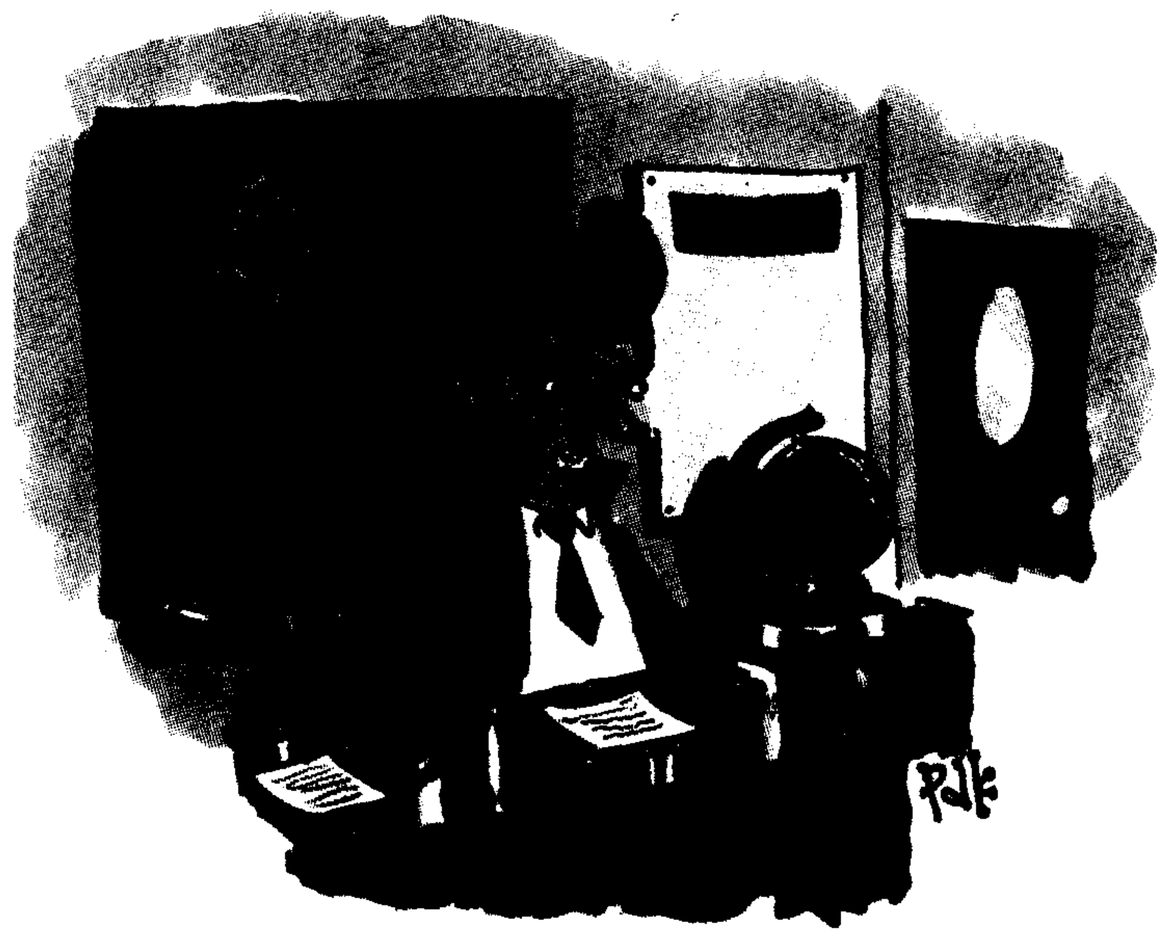
William Hague

Tearoom gossip pointed the finger at Hague for being useless, but it was only after he had lost the 2001 election that he confessed to his problem.

Baroness Thatcher

Few would ever have dared to suggest that she was useless, with the exception of Edward Heath, who may have been using this tactic as a screen to hide his own uselessness.

"Not so fast, my friend! Ernest Wimbush, EEC Fisheries Quota Inspectorate"



"Today we'll carry on talking about probably the greatest king of all..."

COUGH GETS WORSE

by Our Tory Staff Peter O'Bore

STUNG by criticism that he has done absolutely nothing since being elected leader of the Conservative Party last September, Mr Iain Duncan Cough last night shocked his three remaining supporters by sacking party chairman David Whohe while he was on holiday in Florida fishing for votes in the next leadership election *(Surely 'marlin'? Ed.).*

Unfortunately, Mr Whohe was unaware of Mr Cough's shock initiative because his mobile telephone was not working, but on his return to Gatwick he read that he had been fired in an old copy of the Daily Mail.

Mr Whohe immediately rang Duncan Cough at his luxury Berkshire hideaway, Strepsils, to ask what was going on.

Mr Cough sprang into action once again and told him that, despite having sacked Mr Whohe the day before, he would now like to promote him to the key job of trying to work out what John Prescott is saying.

In a statement issued later to the press, Mr Cough said, "It is quite untrue to say that I sacked Mr Whohe and replaced him with Mrs Whoshe. Even if I did, I want to make it clear that I have such confidence in Mr Whohe's loyalty and commitment that I promise to back him when he stands against me for the leadership next week."

Mr Oliver Letwin is 22.

WASHED-UP CREATURES ARE DOOMED, SAY EXPERTS

By Our Environmental Staff **The Prince Of Whales**

SCIENTISTS are baffled by the apparently suicidal behaviour of a school of Tories which have yet again been washed up in Westminster. A leading expert said yesterday, "It is very sad. This has happened too often before. Last year when they were last washed up, we imagined that they could somehow recover.

"But now here they are, only a year later, more washed up than ever. It seems as if these creatures never learn, and are now headed for extinction."

ME AND MY SPOON

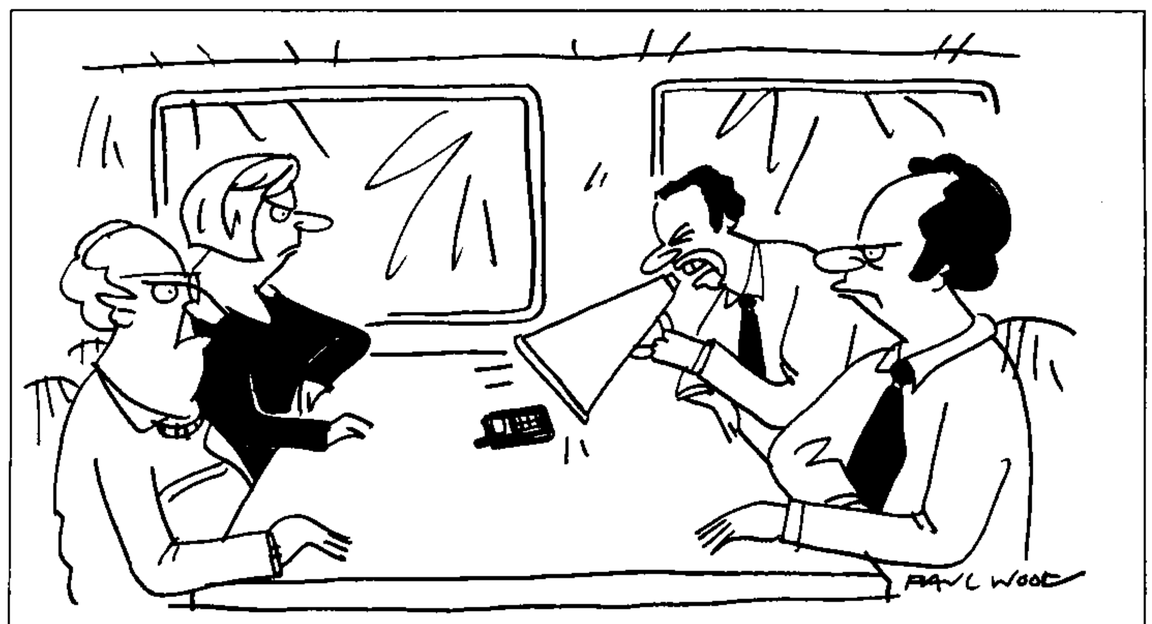
THIS WEEK

NEIL KINNOCK

I suppose now you're Vice-President of the European Commission you have a lot of spoons from different countries?

Now, look, let's be totally frank and utterly honest about this. If you're trying to suggest that in any way I have used my position as a commissioner to get more spoons than I was legally entitled to, can I just make it absolutely clear that I totally repudiate and repudiate totally any suggestion whatsoever, and I know how you people work, with your anti-European smears and innuendoes, no, no, don't try to deny it, I know that you'd like everyone to believe that everyone in Europe is just out for themselves, with their snouts in the trough, trying to grab as many spoons as they can get their hands on, well, let me tell you that everything you are insinuating is a tissue of total travesties, and that there is not a shred of evidence, not one shred, to support the allegation that I, in my capacity as Fraud Commissioner, have in any way sought to increase my totally legitimate and permissible spoons allowance, which currently, I might add, is a very modest 306.85 Euro-spoons per annum (equating to 203.7 standard British spoons under the weighted transfer system), where was I, no, let me finish, you've had your say, which incidentally was totally disgraceful and a gross abuse of the freedom of the press, which incidentally I wholly and utterly support, so long as it is not irresponsibly used to promote an outrageous and wholly indefensible "Little Englander" agenda by trying to smear myself and my colleagues, who are as dedicated and hard-working *(Mr Kinnock continued in this vein for several hours, until the interviewer finally managed to ask him whether anything amusing had ever happened to him in connection with spoons, to which he replied "No, but" and continued for several more hours.)*

NEXT WEEK: Sally Gunnell on *"Me And My Bedside Alarm Clock."*



"Can you hear me now?"

COMMONWEALTH GAMES

ENGLAND TRIUMPH

by Our Athletics Staff **PHILIPPA SPORTS-SECTION**

THE 38,000 capacity crowd in Manchester's sunlit Stadium of Glory rose to their feet screaming in rapture yesterday to salute the astonishing world-class performance of plucky Moss-side-born local lass Michelle Yelland, 24, as she gallantly powered in with a personal best time of only 3 hours 33 minutes, to take a stunning fourth place in the 20,000 metres Synchronised Underwater Hurdles.

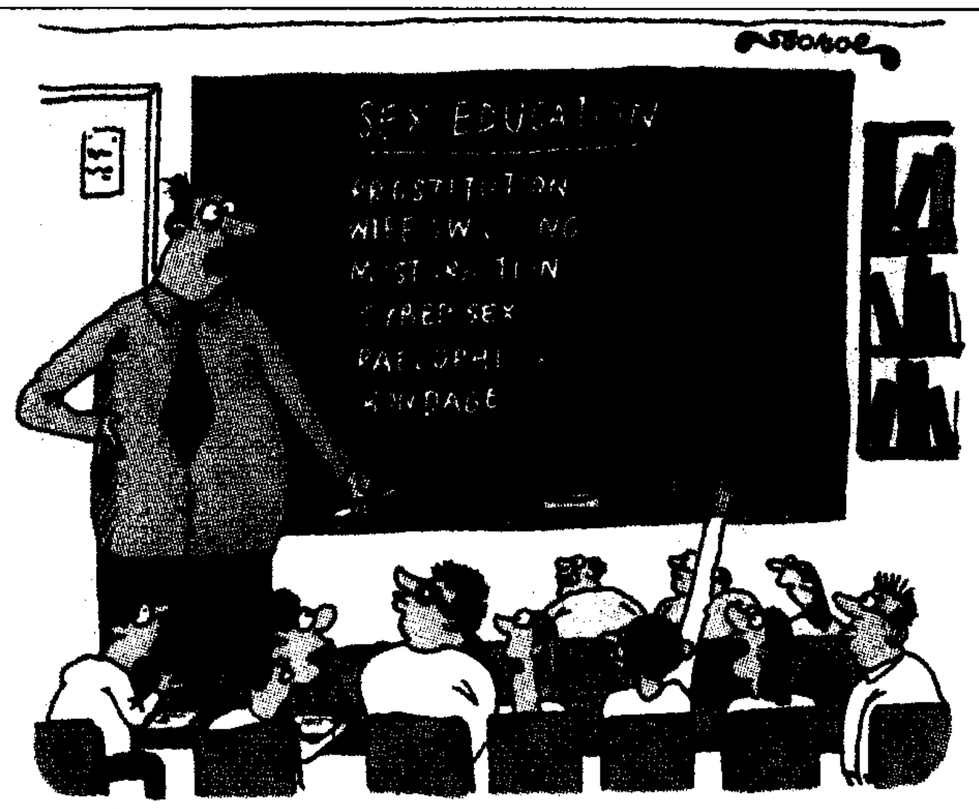
After the race, Michelle told the BBC's Sally Jockstrap, "This is the most fantastic moment in my life. I always dreamed that one day I could come fourth in a race like this and now I have.

"Fortunately, the three African runners were so far ahead of me that I didn't have to think about them during the race."

As the crowd hummed Land of Hope and Glory under its breath during the playing of the Kenyan national anthem, Michelle performed a lap of honour, but unfortunately was forced to retire halfway round, due to a recurrence of her old hamstring problem.

Results

20,000 Metre Synchronised Underwater Hurdles: 1, C. Kipcat (Kenya); 2, J. Kipcat (Kenya); 3, K. Kipcat (Kenya); 4, M. Yelland (England); 5,6,7,8, Who cares?
400 Metre Men's Jacuzzi: 1, F. Montgomery-Jarvis (New Zealand); 2, P.W.B. McCready (Canada); 3, Fletcher Christian (Pitcairn); 94, Dwayne Slomo (England)
Men's One-Legged Freestyle Groping: 1, Bruce Blimey (Aus)
(That's enough Commonwealth Games. Ed.)



"Well done Simpson, 'making love' is also another good example of sexual activity"

LIVER GETS HUMAN TRANSPLANT

By Our Celebrity Staff
Philippa Redtop

A healthy liver was today given a new George Best, hospital authorities announced.

A spokesman for the transplanted organ told reporters "the operation has been a success, but the liver is furious".

"It was hoping to live out its days in a healthy human being, but now it finds it is facing years of abuse as part of the world's greatest living drunk" *(surely 'footballer'? Ed.)*.

Doctors warn that the liver may yet reject its new host and that it was too early to celebrate the success of the operation with a round of trebles.

POETRY CORNER

Lines on the Retirement of Arthur Scargill as Life-President of the National Union of Mineworkers

So. Farewell then
Arthur Scargill,
Famed militant leader of
Britain's miners.

With your
Combed-over hair
And high-pitched
Yorkshire voice,
You were the image
Of the 1970s.

"Everybody out!"
Yes, that was your
Catchphrase.

And now you are.

Although you
Were life-president
You are not dead.
Although the same
Cannot be said

For your
Union.

E.J.Thribb,
Life President of the
National Union of Poetical
Obituarists (NUPO).
Membership: one.

Daily Mail
FRIDAY, AUGUST 9, 2002

GIANT ASTEROID WILL HIT EARTH AND END PROPERTY BOOM SHOCK

by Daily Mail Staff
Clare Monger

NEW LABOUR were left squirming yesterday as news emerged that a giant asteroid hurtling towards the earth at thousands of miles an hour could spell a premature end to the property boom some time in 2019.

A spokesman for the Conservative Party said: "Take it from me, when this huge lump of molten rock hits the planet's surface and destroys every living thing in its wake, the likes of Tony Blair and Gordon Brown will have egg all over their faces and they'll be forced to put their hands up and concede defeat."

On Other Pages Scientists say that awful hot weather was the fault of the Labour Government **2** Scientists say those awful storms that followed that awful hot weather were the fault of the Labour Government **3** Pictures of women in bikinis **4-94**

POLLY FILLER

ON THE AUGUST NIGHTMARE

IT'S THE summer holidays and I am furious. The reason will be well-known to all you working mums and useless dads out there, and that is the old question, "Who is going to look after the children while we go on holiday?"

The answer should be simple. The nanny. Yet the sort of girls one is forced to employ nowadays refuse to work a 24-hour day for 3 weeks looking after the toddler Charlie whilst Simon and I go off for a week's scuba diving in Zanzibar, a week's ballooning in Madagascar and a week to flop around camel racing in Dubai.

Honestly! All we want is a little time together for the two of us, away from the stress of supervising Charlie's childcare and what happens?

A flat refusal from the ungrateful Angolan teenager!

SO THE next choice is obvious. The grandparents should do it. Surely one of these couples should be grateful for a chance to spend three weeks bonding with their grandson?

But no. My mother is too busy swanning about visiting my father in hospital and the useless Simon's parents are even more useless. They are dead.

So with no one willing to lift a finger to help us get away and recharge our batteries, what on earth are we supposed to do?

Stay at home? Take Charlie with us? Go stark staring mad?

Any readers who have any suggestions, do let me know!

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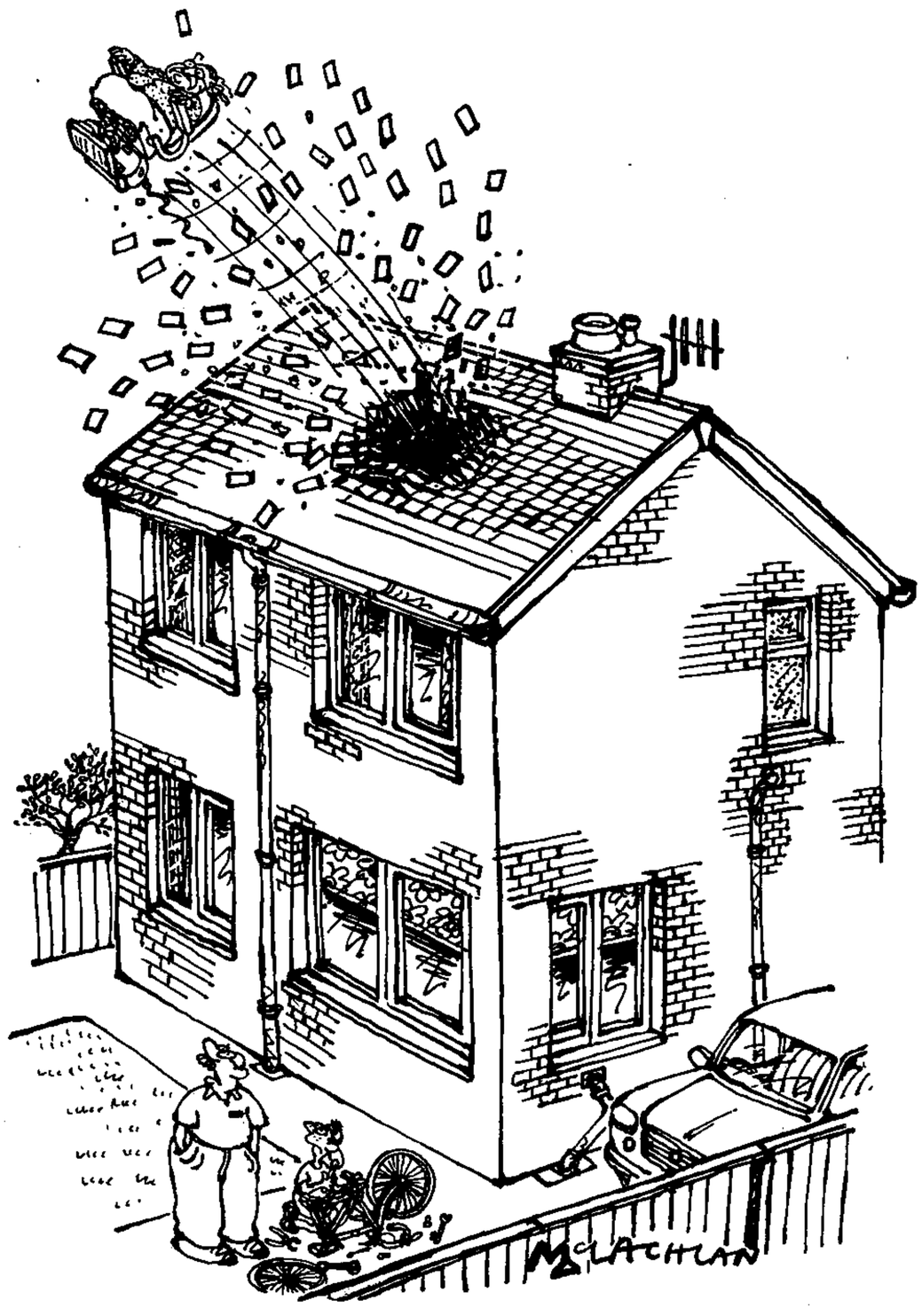


"You've been messing around with your gran's stairlift again, haven't you?"

The Daily Telegraph

Est 1855

Full marks to the Mayor

This newspaper cannot disguise its relief that at last London has a truly right-wing mayor who is not afraid to run our capital city in the interests of the rich, at the expense of the poor. Mr Livingstone's courageous scheme has rightly earned him the sobriquet "Blue Ken".

The idea is breathtakingly simple. Those who can afford to pay Mr Livingstone's new congestion charge will be free to cruise around the empty streets of London, enjoying the privilege that their industry and enterprise has rightly earned. Meanwhile the working classes will quite rightly be forced to leave their cars and to squeeze their way onto antiquated buses and tubes, or the exciting new "standing-up only" cattle trucks provided by that excellent British Le Connex du Sud-Est.

It may be too early for "Blue Ken" to put himself forward as the next leader of the Conservative Party, but Mr Duncan Smith and his gay henchmen sshould be quaking in their boots.

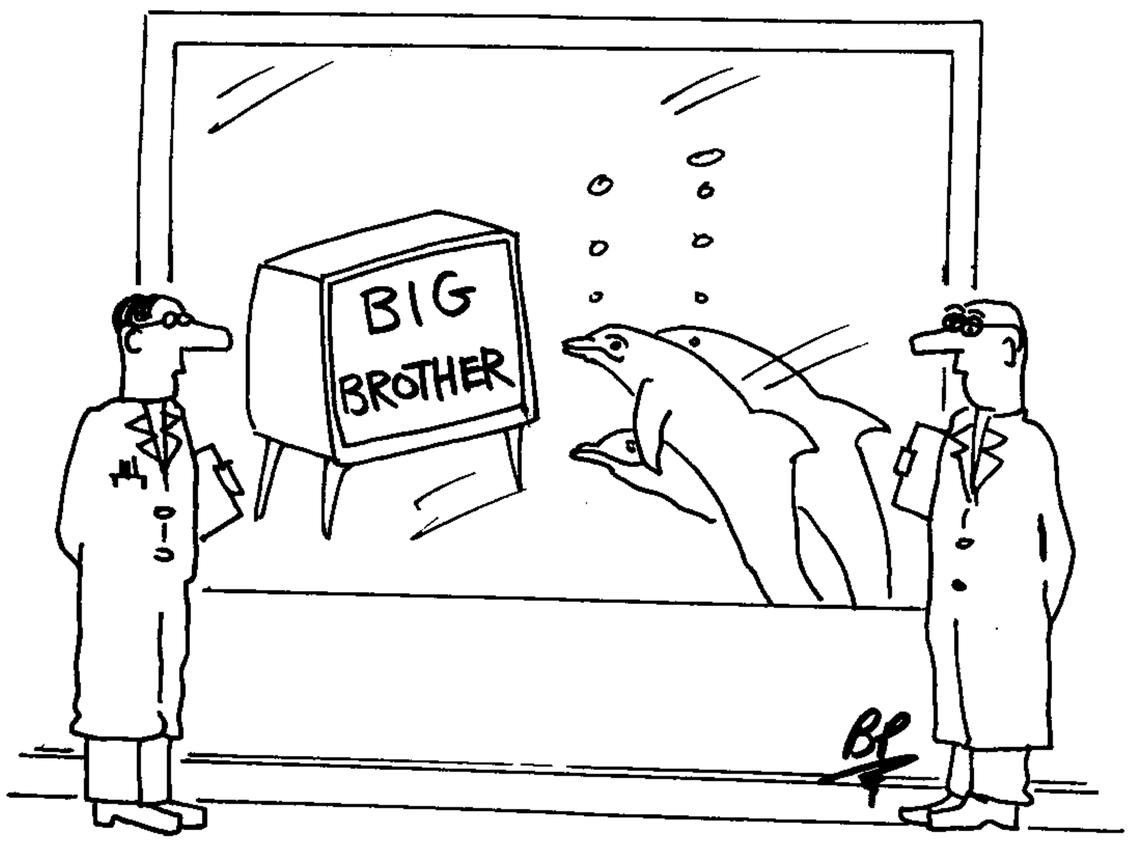
On my bike

by **Beano Boris Johnson**

Blimey! Yours truly was just taking a spin on his trusty old Raleigh Roadster (c.1955) when, woops, would you believe it, I became the first ever victim of that latest affliction of Islington's politically correct thought police, namely, a hatchet-faced woman on another bike pulling up next to me at the traffic lights and shouting at me, "That column of yours is absolute garbage – can't you find something more interesting to write about than how you cycle to work on your rotten bike?"

Cripes, talk about batey! What's a chap to do when he's been ticked off in no uncertain manner by someone even more frightening than Nanny?

© The Daily Beano-graph



"It seems they're not as intelligent as we thought"

NEW-LOOK QUEEN: THEN AND NOW

No. 94: The Royal Tattoo

THEN

NOW

DANDO CASE: POLICE FOUND INNOCENT

by Our Dando Staff **Desperate Dando**

IN A SHOCK verdict, the Appeal Court yesterday ruled that the police were wholly vindicated in their desire to find someone guilty of shooting a famous television personality.

The judges were unanimous that the case brought by the police against Mr Barry George had been "overwhelming".

"The task in front of these dedicated officers was colossal," said Lord Justice Cocklecarrot.

"Having arrested Mr Boy George for this heinous crime, they were then in the unenviable position of having no evidence on which to convict him.

"But justice was not to be denied. After labouring night and day for months on end, they finally came up with the clinching piece of evidence – a small scrap of paper bearing the incriminating words 'He must have done it because we arrested him' and bearing the signature of Inspector 'Knacker of the Yard' Knacker, head of the 5000-strong 'Find the Dando Killer' unit."

Speaking outside the courtroom after the verdict, Inspector Knacker told waiting newsmen, "This is a great day for British justice. I and my colleagues have been protesting for years that we were totally innocent, and now the British legal system has finally proved us right."

Inspector Knacker is 56.

Why are English men so pathetic?

asks Leah McLaren

SHE'S YOUNG, attractive and Canadian. Yet, after a dozen attempts, Leah McLaren could not find one male editor in this country who could resist publishing her article.

"What is wrong with them all?", asked Liah McLaren. "I made it perfectly clear that this was really thin stuff, but every single one of them fell for it".

Leah McItallup said that her terrible experiences have taught her some very important lessons about English editors.

1. The ones who have been to boarding schools like Eton are the worst – Boris Johnson, for example, was too scared of women to say, "No thanks, this is rubbish."
2. English editors always split the bill so that they all end up paying for the same piece by me.
3. English editors are all repressed heterosexuals who are dying to put in a picture of a blonde girl with a story about sex.
4. English editors all drink too much – they must do to have printed such ropy old drivel.

© All newspapers, every day

Literary Review

Filet of Soul

The Lovely Bones
Alice Sebold
(Picador, £12.99)

ANY smart American high-school kid looking for a career with solid long-term prospects ought to go into passport control or bereavement counselling. Growth professions after 11 September, they threaten to become national industries if President Shrub really is going to march into Iraq.

It would be tough for a zeitgeist-chasing novelist to write the fictional equivalent of border inspections but Alice Sebold, an ex-journalist, has come up with the literary version of a 12-steps-to-closure programme for the mourning. Most debut novels with literary ambitions sell a few thousand copies. *The Lovely Bones* has shifted close to a million since its US publication in June.

To be fair to Sebold – survivor of a terrible college rape attack, the subject of her only previous, non-fiction, book – she wrote the book while skyscrapers were still safe places and so there's absolutely no charge of cashing in. Her near-million readers, though, aren't so easily exonerated for cashing out on this. It's important to acknowledge that there are extra-literary reasons for the book's success.

The Lovely Bones, you see, is set in heaven. Susie Salmon, aged 14, spends the first few pages describing her incarceration, rape and finally dismemberment at the hands of the local creepo. She can tell us this because she's narrating from behind the pearly gates. Heaven, as Sebold depicts it, consists of what you most dreamed of on earth. So the ghost Susie lives in the kind of house she wished her folks had had on earth and attends an idealised version of her high school in which the only lessons are art lessons and there are no nerdy boys.

Even the best theologians have struggled with the question of what a soul might do during eternal life and it's immediately clear that there are big doctrinal problems with Sebold's idea. What if your greatest dream on earth was to live to a great age or to marry someone else? If you can watch your loved ones from above – Susie is able to observe her family's grief and the progress of the murder investigation – then would someone really be required to gaze down as their partner slept with someone new or their family used the loo?

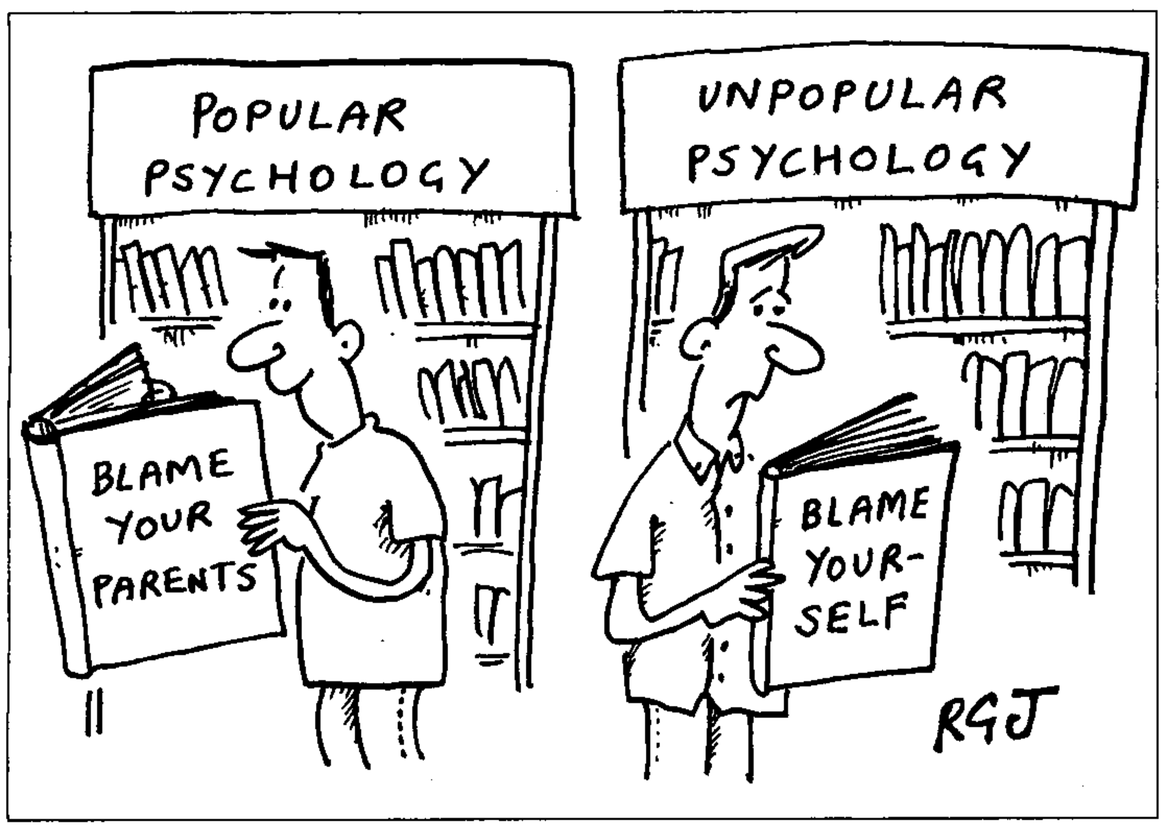
Sebold skips around such logical objections and it's surely the reassuring simplicity of her vision which has won her such an enormous audience. To be a really big-seller in America, a novel needs to have redemption as its theme. The shelves are fat with protagonists in recovery from violence, cocaine, booze, child-abuse, divorce, Vietnam and Reaganism. Susie Salmon, though, is in recovery from the real lulu: death!

Initially frustrated at her premature death, she comes by the end, like the best AA patient, to take each non-day at the time and put her faith in a higher power. Sebold's heaven is, in effect, a branch of Necrotics Anonymous.

It's easy to see the appeal of this story in a nation struggling to come to terms with the fact that three thousand people can be vapourised in a few seconds at their workplace or on their vacation airplane. Indeed, one of Sebold's celestial inventions – that you get your peak-health body back in heaven, no matter what happens to it on earth – can be seen as specifically consoling, given the terrible fact that a majority of the 11 September relatives were left no body-parts to bury.

As an English publication, though, *The Lovely Bones* must earn a place in the library rather than a place in the heart and, as literary fiction, it's a clever twist on the murder story but one which brings a soppy Sunday School mentality to the profound question of what it might mean to have an eternal soul. Its afterlife in the minds of English readers may be rather less intense.

'Shelf-Lifer'



Books & Bookmen

■ ALARMING news from the *Torygraph* where the absence of literary editor Kate Summerscale on maternity leave has realised a classic exercise in books page dumbing down.

Despite having Summerscale's deputy Tom Payne in charge, editor Charles Moore accepted the suggestion of features editor Corrinna Honan that *she* oversee things on the books pages.

Clearly Ms Honan, late of the *Mail*, is aiming for a somewhat more populist approach than the man she supplanted. Her first week in charge produced a four-column half-page shot of Rita Hayworth draped in a towel. Subsequently a whole raft of upper-brow reviews – Anthony Quinn on the latest instalment of Dickens's letters, Allan Massie on Christianity, etc – got spiked on the ground that readers could do with something a bit more interesting.

Thus Ms Honan has been eagerly canvassing future items for review. Her first ingenious idea was to ask Martin Amis to cover the forthcoming memoir by his step-mother Elizabeth-Jane Howard: inexplicably Mart declined. Other hot items suggested for future coverage by Honan include Nicola and Natalie Appleton's autobiography, Lulu's *I Don't Want To Fight* ("the small girl with the huge voice", says Ms Honan), Ulrika Jonsson's life story ("promises to be explosive") Bill Brewster and Frank Broughton's *How To DJ* and offerings by Geri Halliwell, Jamie Oliver and Norman Wisdom.

Alas, despite Tom Payne's replacement by Sam Leith, things are far from rosy in this increasingly low-brow garden. So far half-a-dozen potential reviewers have mysteriously refused to have anything to do with the Richard and Judy book.

■ AS IF one puff for Allison Pearson's debut novel *I Don't Know How She Does It* weren't enough (see *Eye* 1058), the *Evening Standard* had another one for its columnist last week when readers were introduced over two illustrated pages to Miranda Richards, "the real Kate Reddy".

Like the fictional heroine created by her author friend from various Islington Pilates classes, Richards combined a career in the City with the exhausting task of finding a nanny so she could have children too.

The article was headlined "Is this the real Kate Reddy?" and concluded with the title of the book, "I don't know how she does it", as a tribute to Richards' juggling of nanny management, motherhood and career, even though she no longer "does it", the whole family having "downshifted" to the country.

But how does Pearson do it, getting so much puffery in the *Standard*?

■ THE August launch of BBC 4Word – the new digital radio station for audiobooks, readings, drama and comedy from the archives – looks set to pass without a sound.

4Word was slated to appear at the same time as 1Xtra, Radio 1's spin-off black music station which has begun test transmissions. But there's been nary a squeak from it. The reason? For once, the BBC's parsimony.

Although audiences will be tiny until digital radio becomes commonplace, the Beeb is promoting ventures like 4Word as central to its brave new multi-channel vision. But at the same time it's using the low ratings defence to offer writers and performers either nothing or next to nothing for repeats of their work on 4Word.

The Spoken Word Publishers' Association and Equity are understood to have dug their heels in and until a settlement is reached, 4Word won't launch.

The Curse of Gnome

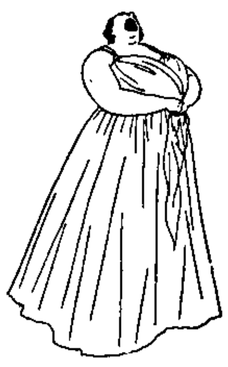
■ THE last *Eye* revealed the cosy world of the Forward Prize, Britain's biggest poetry award. Among this year's judges were two poets published by Picador (Michael Donaghy and Sean O'Brien) who had shortlisted two other Picador poets (Peter Porter and Paul Farley) for the £10,000 prize.

Last week the chairman of the award, Michael Donaghy resigned. He insisted the *Eye*'s allegations were ludicrous, but added: "I resigned so that the panel should consider nothing but the quality of the work, to give every author the same chance."

'Bookworm'

All the time spent at the computer had begun to affect Nigel.

MUSIC & MUSICIANS



THE plot thickens at English National Opera where Nicholas Payne's sudden departure as general-director has been followed by a tidal wave of rumour, intrigue and alarm. It seems finances are more fragile than anyone thought, raising a question-mark over next year's £40m refurbishment of the London Coliseum.

Given tough new chairman Martin Smith's penchant for harsh medicine (it was Smith who forced the well-intentioned but not terribly effective Payne to fall on his sword), staff are bracing themselves for lay-offs and a drastic scaling-down of ENO's artistic life.

Insiders are convinced Smith intends to use refurbishment as an excuse to close the company for up to 18 months. They also fear that in the long term he plans to clip the company's artistic wings by anchoring its repertory in safe works, safely staged (ie more Jonathan Miller *Carmens* and fewer Richard Jones *Lulus*). The biggest fear is that he plans to reduce the company to part-time operation: the ultimate humiliation for a flagship and supposedly *national* arts enterprise.

While the various unions within ENO are preparing for battle, the ENO press office is saying nothing. Caroline Felton, supposedly acting managing director, is "unobtainable"; the chairman is "abroad" and Payne has gone to ground (although it was announced that he is still, in some vague way, engaged as a consultant).

The only person with an interest in these matters currently visible in London is Anthony Whitworth-Jones, ex-Glyndebourne and former boss of the Dallas Opera, who has been tipped as Payne's successor. But all he has said so far is that he has received no approach from ENO. Perhaps Martin Smith should fly home to sort out what is turning into an appalling mess.

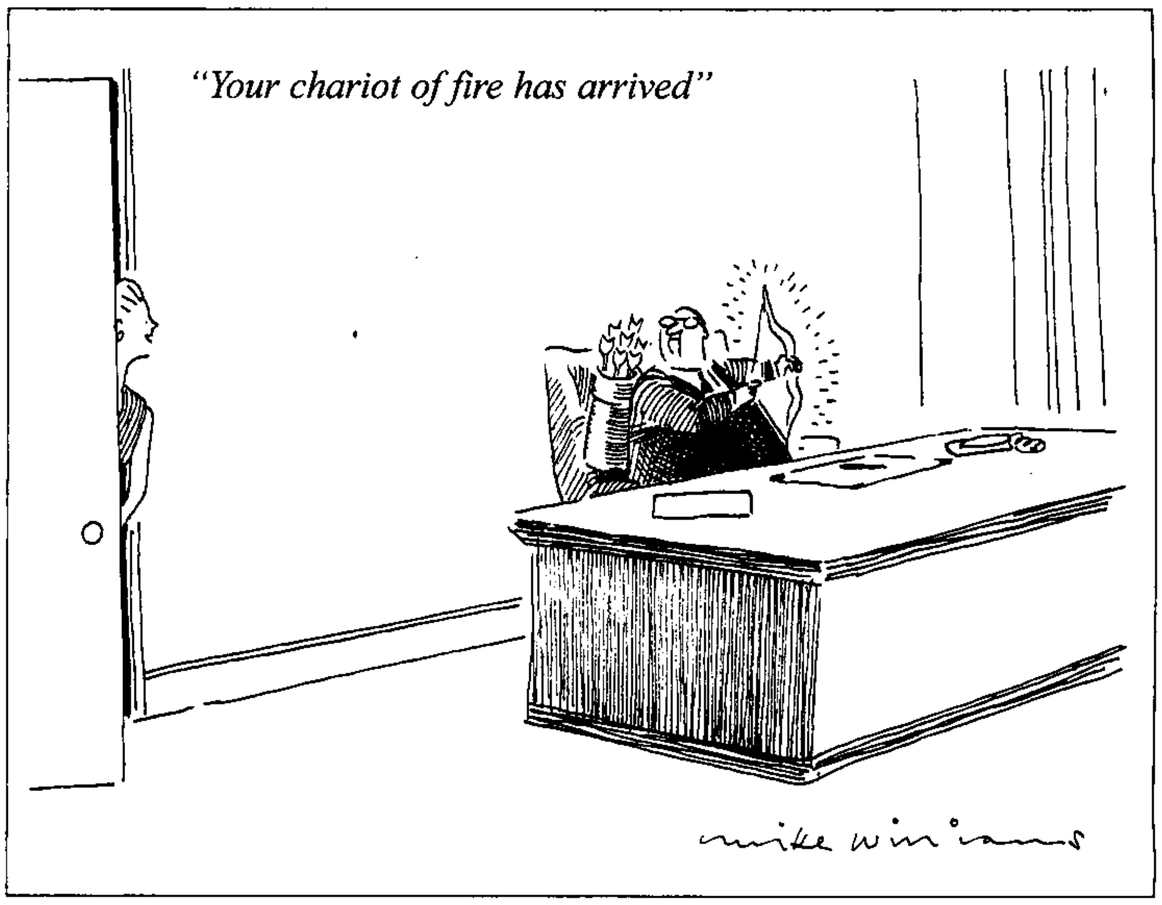
MORE on the Hanover Band, a renowned Early Music group which ceased to exist after struggling with mountains of debt (*Eye* 1048). The husband and wife team of Stephen Neiman and Caroline Brown who ran the group had become renowned in their own right for non-payment of fees and lack of administrative reliability.

But it is not just the band which suffered under Mr Neiman's charge. Three days before Christmas, six workers were made redundant from a company called Old Market Enterprises which was the business arm of a charity called The Old Market Trust. One of them was heavily pregnant and days away from qualifying for maternity leave.

The trust had been controlled by Mr Neiman since its creation and the award of £3m of lottery grants. The money was being used to convert a grade II market building into a Brighton and Hove arts centre, but the project left debts of more than £1.4m. Contractors had to threaten legal action to be paid and local arts organisations like the Starlite Theatre Company who'd been promised access to the new centre were turned away.

One of the workers, Patrick Roberts, recently reproduced the *Eye*'s article about the Hanover Band on his website but was surprised to learn that access to the site had been blocked by his service provider.

The provider had received a complaint from Neiman's solicitors that the website was defamatory and so had blocked access to the site rather than run the risk of legal action. The *Eye* has not heard a peep from Mr Neiman but his bullying tactics were sufficient to scare the internet provider and silence a former employee.



ALL is not well in Cardiff, for years host to the *Cardiff Singer of the World* competition that has launched talents like Karita Mattila, Dmitri Hvorostovsky and Bryn Terfel.

It's the biggest singing prize around and Cardiff folk are rightly proud of it, not least as part of their credentials to be European City of Culture in 2008. But the BBC has decided it doesn't get a fair share of the credit for the show. So next year the name will be changed to *BBC Singer of the World,* with the words *in Cardiff* tacked on the end so they are bound to be left off in press reports – as they were by the controller of BBC Wales and the controller of BBC4 when they announced the change. The welcome in the hillside is growing chilly.

'Lunchtime O'Boulez'

Pseuds Corner

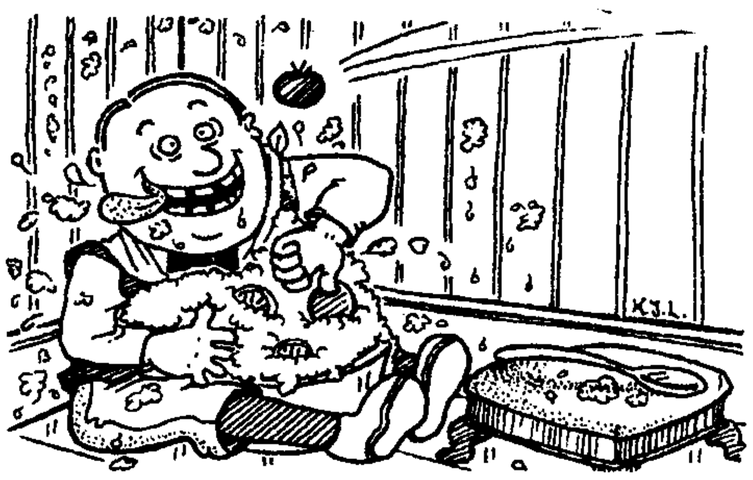
It's hard to describe how awesome was the impact of seeing this still-slight figure on a stage 50 yards away, without admitting to having wept as he sang *Heroes* with the simple grace it deserves. Its almost trite words of empowerment were repeated back to him thousands of times over with utter sincerity. Such is Bowie's aura, that undeniable sense of otherness that makes even those who gave up on him in the 1980s flock back to him like space cadets to the commander.

LYNSEY HANLEY
Daily Telegraph

Inspired by the cut-up operations of the Dadaists, and the techniques and experiments of William Burroughs and John Cage, **Digital Poetics** explores the potential for sound poetry in the digital environment. When the start button is pressed, a single line of poetry is cut up, randomly arranged and then split into tiny particles of sound. The original line then has a 1 in 4 chance of reappearing in its original, coherent form. Subjected to looping and granulation are some significant voices of 20th century poetry, T.S. Eliot, Hilda Doolittle and Hugo Ball. By isolating words visually and through sound, the artist attempts to heighten the importance of the ear in appreciation and to explore the semantic properties of the language.

A 'ground-breaking computer installation' by composer and sonic artist TIM BROWN at the Royal Festival Hall's Poetry Library

I tried to describe one dish in particular, an amazing, complicated thing. It was monkfish liver served as a pate and floating on top of it a froth of soy foam. In orbit around this foie-soy structure were quasars of orange, lemon, grapefruit and, finally, what stopped me, tomato heart, its oozing seeds and essence. What I meant to tell my wife, but couldn't, was that when I ate the substance of liver and foam with some grapefruit and then



scooped the heart, naked and dripping, into my mouth, I'd felt, in all my happiness and weird, heady lightness, an undercurrent of impermanence, some creeping feeling of danger and fear. All of it in this single bite that slid down my throat.

MICHAEL PATERNITI
Observer Food Monthly

The 'collapse' of Soviet communism, though managed by KGB deception strategy, gave expression to the bankruptcy of Marxist claims that socialism must be economically superior to capitalism which itself must collapse because of its own 'dialectical contradictions'/ What the professorial elite of the socialist movement has put in their place is an eclectic amalgam of economic determinism and Machiavellian voluntarism inspired by the ideas of Gramsci. In consequence the driving force of globalisation is in fact the closet left liberal elite, notwithstanding its 'dialectical' interaction with so called anti-globalisation protestors. Two assumptions guide this strategy: first, that international integration will facilitate a more direct struggle between labour and capital whilst undermining bourgeois nationalist ideology; second, that such policy is best facilitated by molecular infiltrattion of the bourgeois state apparatus...(continues)

Recruiting leaflet issued by the 'Labour Committee on Democratic Accountability of Secret Services'

Pseuds Corporate

Alison Kenny and Simon Lee have been appointed to become Business Relationship Managers for Sky Interactive & Marketing and Corporate areas respectively. They will work with you to understand your specific requirements and will then draw up detailed plans, business cases and proposals for submission to the demand management process. They will also act as your central interface point to manage your project through the implementation life cycle and then also to monitor ongoing achievement of service levels for live systems.

Internal memo sent by SIMON POST, BskyB Group Director of IT and Strategy

Both of these new businesses, while relatively small, are important additions to Heinz's flavor and taste solutions strategy.

WILLIAM R. JOHNSON, President and CEO of Heinz, quoted in the Seychelles Review

CONTRIBUTORS: Michael Henderson, Cressida Connolly, Christopher Roberts, Charlie Hill, C. Tudball, Karl Handy.

£10 paid for all entries

SUMMER READING IN THE *EYE*

SIR MAX HASTINGS
Author and Editor

I was particularly absorbed by *Bayonets and Bicycles* (Snobbe Press £29.99), an elegant facsimile of Lt Colonel 'Buster' Tulkinghorn's memoir of a little-known episode from the Second Afghan War in which he and his fellow subaltern the Hon. G.H. Twytte travelled the length of the Khyber Pass by penny-farthing as a means of outwitting Britain's sworn enemy the Maharajah of Jodphur. Such an inspired attitude towards military transport would go a long way to improving the lot of our own Tommy Atkinses on today's north-west frontier.

PAUL JOHNSON
Historian

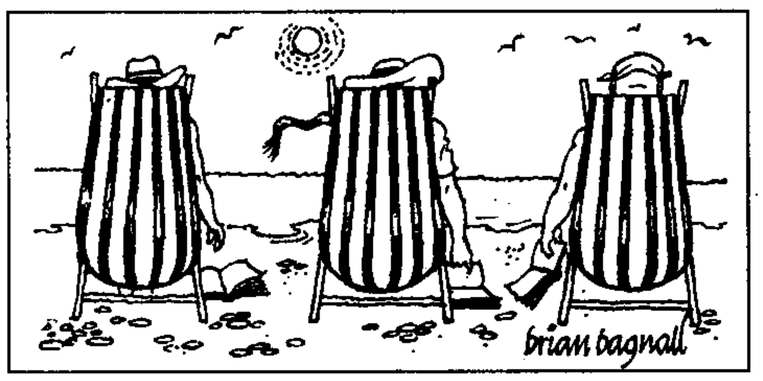
I am sure that one of my talented younger colleagues has produced some illuminating work on an historical subject in recent months, so perhaps you could kindly oblige me by filling in the details. Thank you so much.

STEPHEN BAYLEY
Style Commentator

The usual eclectic smorgasbroad of cultural trifles, I fear, among which Jean-Luc Pseud's dazzling meta-philosophical investigation *Un Livre Que Les Multitudes De Gens Ne Comprendent* (Farceur Press 100 Fr) will doubtless predominate.

ALAIN DE BOTTON
Philosopher

I have been reading a very interesting book by a man named Cervantes. Apparently it was written in Spain a long time ago. It is about this other man called Don Quixote who goes out riding a lot with his servant Sancho Panza. On one of these rides he sees a windmill which he thinks is a giant so he tries to attack it. I think this is a very interesting metaphor for the human condition and will be just the ticket for my new book, *Wisdom Writ Small*.



ANTHONY HOLDEN
Writer and Critic

White Lies (Vole Press £11.99), Magenta Spart's searing tale of generational conflict in the ghettos of north London moves in complex areas about this benighted country of ours – race, multiculturalism and so on – on which I have long brooded and very nearly persuaded the *Observer* to take a piece about only last week.

ANDREW ROBERTS
Historian

Hitherto the fifteen-minute aftermath of the Battle of Dettingen, in which English and French troops threw *brioches* seized from the tray of a passing patisserie vendor at one another until their ammunition was exhausted has remained one of the more obscure campaigns of eighteenth century military history. Now, in *Croissants at the Ready!* (Motte & Bailey £100) the celebrated historian Professor Hugh Hee provides the first exhaustive account of …(*continues endlessly*)

ROBERT McCRUM
Literary Editor, The Observer

Summer holidays are always a good time to be planning the books pages of the autumn months, so I shall be taking the current Faber and Faber catalogue. This usually has some excellent stuff in it.

MARIELLA FROSTRUP
Writer and Television Personality

I have always found the combination of economical prose and expansive landscapes in the work of [*could you fill this in please? Thanks M.F.*] immensely compelling and he/she should be a deserved winner of this year's Booker Prize.

MELVYN BRAGG
Novelist and Broadcaster

As you are no doubt aware, I am an extremely busy man with a great many important things to do and little time for indiscriminate reading. However, my summer stay in Cumberland will be passed in the company of a great many old friends. Bellow is long overdue. Dostoevsky if I can fit him in. Jane Austen if there's room. A bed will be made up for Proust. Space will be at a premium, but that is the kind of person I am.

JILLY COOPER
Novelist

My agent thinks it would be a jolly good idea if I said how much I liked the work of all those super young people whose books appear in the shops next to mine, although of course in *much* smaller piles. So could I say then how hugely I enjoyed Nicola Hornby's *About A Good Enough Dad* and *Bridget Jones and the Temple of Doom*?

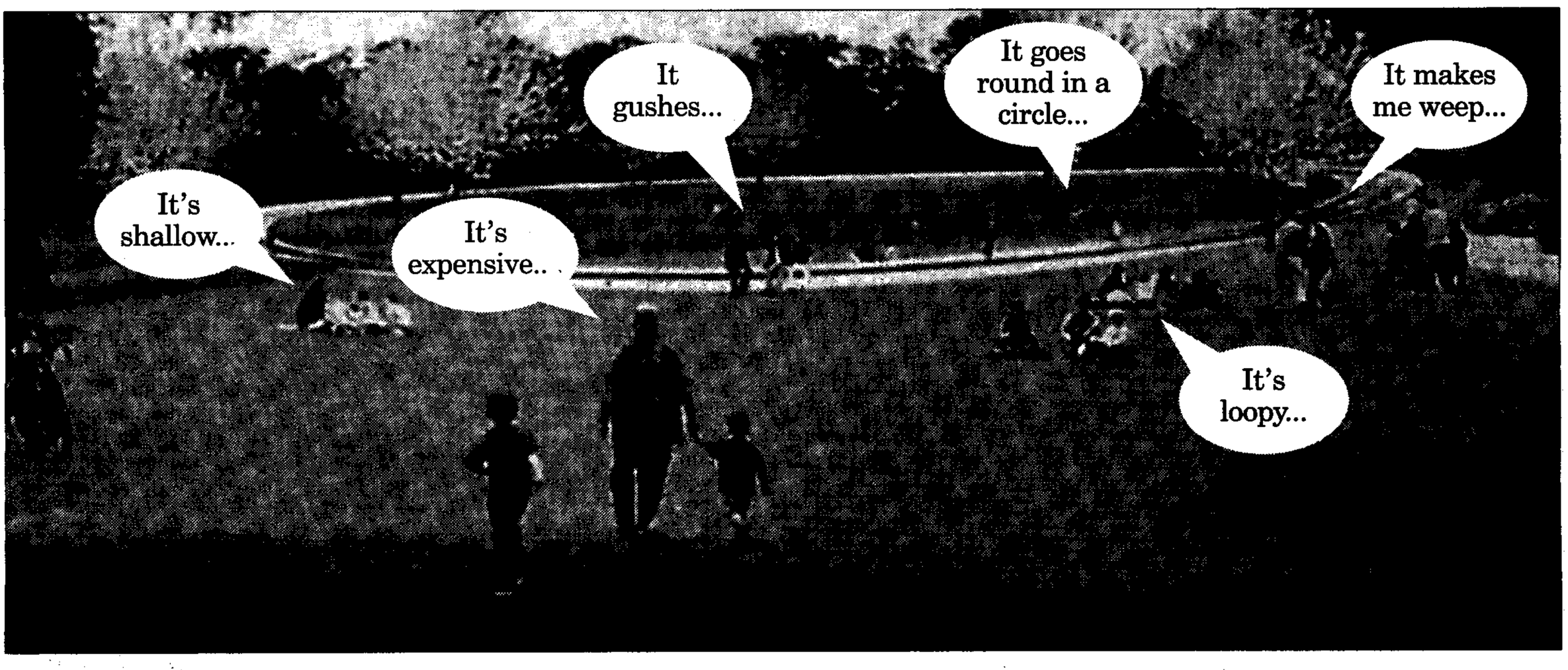
CARMEN CALLIL
Critic

Tie Your Didgeridoo Down Sport! (Wallaby Press $99.99). Sir Les Kookaburra's warts 'n' all biography of the great Bondi Beach Frisbee thrower Bruce Possum is undoubtedly the greatest contribution to Australian cultural history I have read this year.

TOM PAULIN
Poet and Controversialist

The recent events on the West Bank have persuaded me that I made a big mistake about David Irving's incontestably prescient… (*continues p. 94*)

Diana Fountain Controversy



IN THE BACK

MISCARRIAGES SPECIAL

SEEING IS BELIEVING

WHEN the parents of Stephen Lawrence brought a private prosecution against three racists they accused of murdering their son, the trial at the Old Bailey collapsed when vital eyewitness evidence from Stephen's friend and fellow victim Duwayne Brooks was ruled inadmissible.

Brooks, who had managed to flee the six-strong gang in April 1993, later picked out Neil Acourt and Luke Knight from police identity parades. But Mr Justice Curtis ruled Brooks' eyewitness testimony "contaminated" because Brooks had suffered a form of amnesia after the attack and had changed his description of the gang member seen wielding a knife. "The perils of mis-identification are well known," said the judge.

Can this possibly be the same Mr Justice Curtis who, along with lord chief justice Lord Woolf and Mr Justice Henriques, last week concluded that the identification evidence against Barry George for murdering Jill Dando was "compelling"?

Eye readers will recall that at George's trial, the jury heard from a succession of eyewitnesses who had *failed* to pick him out on an identity parade: a mother and her daughter-in-law who couldn't decide between George and another man; another who said she was 80 percent sure it was somebody else; a postman who said he recognised George as someone he had spoken to six weeks *after* the shooting but not as the man he had seen on the day. None of these "sightings", moreover, were at the time of the murder but ranged throughout the morning.

There was only one positive identification of George in the street on that day. That was at 7am, hours before the killing, and in connection with a car which was driven away. George cannot drive. Neither of the two key witnesses who saw a man hurrying away immediately after the shooting identified George as the culprit.

Unlike Duwayne Brooks, who identified two people at the killing of Stephen Lawrence, no witness put George at Jill Dando's killing. As Mr Justice Curtis so rightly remarked in the Lawrence case: "No matter how horrific the crime and objectionable the motive that does not enable a judge to remove or alter the legal safeguards in place to prevent the conviction of anybody on misidentification."

PII IN THE SKY

AFTER a four-year investigation the criminal cases review commission (CCRC) has finally sent the case of Erkin Guney, jailed for 14 years for supplying heroin, back to the court of appeal.

The case of 37-year-old Guney has been open to doubt since his trial in 1996 when he insisted he had been fitted up by a business rival in collusion with police. The prosecution withheld "sensitive" material from Guney and the jury, relying on discredited public interest immunity (PII) certificates. These are supposed to protect the public interest but are often found to be at the centre of miscarriages of justice.

Suspicion mounted further when details of tape recordings were released apparently suggesting that detectives offered to "scupper" Guney's trial in return for £50,000 from Guney's millionaire father, Ramadan Guney, the Turkish Cypriot businessman who stood bail for disgraced Polly Peck tycoon Asil Nadir in 1990. The Met's anti-corruption unit investigated the tapes but said there was insufficient evidence for a prosecution.

Unfortunately the CCRC decision sheds no more light on the case. The CCRC letter to Guney and his solicitor says it is unable to provide much information about its considerations "because they are sensitive".

Police, apparently acting on a tip-off, walked into Guney's home in Woodford Green, Essex, on 25 September 1995 with a search warrant. In Guney's daughter's bedroom cupboard they found a semi-automatic pistol wrapped in cling film, 140 rounds of ammunition and nearly 5kgs of heroin with an estimated street value of £750,000.

ERKIN GUNEY: Still in the dark

Guney, who had a mobile phone business, swore he'd been fitted-up by rivals and a serving police officer even gave evidence on his behalf suggesting he may indeed have been set up. Guney's legal team believe it may have been the use of PIIs that prevented Guney from proving this. He was found guilty of possessing a class A controlled substance with intent to supply and a firearm and ammunition without a firearm's certificate and was jailed for 14 years.

The new "sensitive" material referred to by the CCRC is believed to refer to the police-informant relationship in the case. While so much is still concealed, big holes in the evidence give weight to Guney's claims. There was no fingerprint or DNA evidence linking him to the drugs, gun or ammunition; there was no proof he'd ever profited from drug dealing; no drug paraphernalia was ever found on his property; and the cling film wrapping the handgun was different to that found in the house. Guney's only previous convictions were for minor offences.

After seven years in prison, Guney said: "Even now I am still being kept in the dark." The CCRC has apparently forwarded its "sensitive" information to the court of appeal and the crown prosecution service. But with their track records in PII cases, will they disclose it?

NORTHERN IRELAND

LEDU ASTRAY

CALMER times in Northern Ireland are paying a peace dividend — but there are increasing concerns about where the money intended to regenerate the province is going.

Efforts to revive the tourism industry are under a cloud after members of the Northern Ireland assembly's public accounts committee (PAC) criticised the award of £1m of print contracts by the NI Tourist Board to a company called W&G Baird. Bairds is headed by leading businessman Roy Bailie OBE. Mr Bailie, a "new" Labour appointment to the court of the Bank of England, just happens to be the chairman of... the NI Tourist Board.

The contracts were awarded to Bairds over an eight-year period, despite the company either not submitting the lowest tender or facing no competitive tendering at all. The board admits that procedures were "deficient" but says Bailie had no role in print contract decisions. But he didn't have to. As assembly member John Dallat told the committee: "What I'm concerned about is a culture where staff want to keep a strong chairman happy and, without anything being said, poor purchasing procedures were tolerated."

Elsewhere government auditors are trying to unravel some £200,000 in largely unaccounted-for expenses run up by Into the West, a company set up under the auspices of Northern Ireland's local enterprise development unit (LEDU) to encourage successful emigrants to come home and start businesses in the province.

While Into the West's success since 1997 in encouraging entrepreneurial emigrants to return to the Auld Sod appears to have been minimal, not to say non-existent, it has not been for want of trying on the part of its board members. A draft report by the Northern Ireland's department of enterprise, trade and investment (DETI) and the Local Government Audit, reveals that between January 1998 and February 2002 more than £200,000 of expenditure was incurred by Visa card – mostly in relation to business visits overseas.

This was especially good going, notes the report, given that there is no evidence of the board of Into The West ever having authorised the acquisition of any credit cards. Large hotel, food and drink and hospitality bills were run up and unaccounted cash withdrawals made. On one occasion a tip of more than £100 was paid to waiting staff in a US restaurant.

"Some invoices were available for hotel and travel costs, however, a large percentage of the transactions were not supported by receipts or invoices," said the audit team. "Of a random selection of credit card transactions 87 percent were not supported by receipts and invoices."

Most of the expenses concerned were charged to a Visa card held by Joe Doherty, a director of Into the West who has now been suspended from his job as manager of the Omagh branch of Invest Northern Ireland. On one occasion Doherty charged £25 to his Into the West Visa card to have his shoes cleaned.

Also interviewed by investigators has been the former chief of Omagh district council, John McKinney OBE, an Into the West director and head of the EU special funds programme in Northern Ireland. His most intriguing Visa purchase was at a lingerie shop in Moscow (Into the East?) although he did ask for that charge to be transferred from the company card to his own. Other councillors, chief executives and public servants were paid £100 daily while on overseas business.

The auditors said that in the absence of invoices and receipts it was impossible to decide the probity of the expenditure. It concluded: "In an organisation responsible for administering public funds, this situation is indefensible... The overall conclusion emerging is that there is a major lack of control involving considerable sums of public money. The board has failed to adequately perform its basic statutory obligations, in particular in relation to credit card and cash payment issues. In this regard there were added responsibilities on the two directors who held credit cards."

Ultimate responsibility for Into the West lay with LEDU, a small business agency now subsumed into a new body, Invest Northern Ireland.

By unhappy coincidence, LEDU has just been carpeted over two past internal fraud scandals. In the first case, LEDU employee Barbara Atwell stole £118,000 of public money. Her swindling was uncovered in December 1996 by senior LEDU accountant Tom Gribben, who the following year started helping himself. Gribben, an Ulster Unionist Party councillor, took around £40,000 and tried to steal another £60,000.

Both he and Atwell ended up in jail, but LEDU's handling of the cases has been lambasted in a new report from the Northern Ireland assembly.

In the Gribben fraud, LEDU did not bring in police until 12 months after the first evidence against him emerged. It also ignored government procedures on fraud and advice from internal auditors. "We found this astonishing, to the point of negligence," assembly members concluded.

As Ulster's financial scandals quietly accumulate, such behaviour is beginning to feel less astonishing by the day.

In the Back continues overleaf ➔

IN THE BACK

A CAPITA OFFENCE

CAPITA continues to exceed even its own pisspoor standards with its shambolic attempts to run Britain's Criminal Records Bureau (see *Eyes passim*).

One specific result of Crapita's inefficiency has been that two dedicated paediatric nurses, whose services are much needed in the community, have spent months unable to work.

In April David Farrell and wife Susan moved to Wales and signed up with a nursing agency, MPS Healthcare, while they waited for permanent work. As children's nurses they are obliged to get proof from the Criminal Records Bureau that they have no stain on their character that would prevent them working with vulnerable youngsters.

They duly filled in their "disclosure" forms and sent them to the CRB expecting a response within the promised three weeks. After five weeks both the agency and the nurses themselves tried calling the CRB to find out what had happened. The CRB denied ever having received the forms – even though one had been processed and returned.

After another two weeks, a "supervisor" at the CRB suggested they send a second set, which they did by registered post. Several more weeks later, the CRB claimed it hadn't received those forms either. Other excuses followed from the CRB: MPS Healthcare wasn't a registered body and the papers couldn't be processed; er… the CRB's £500,000 scanner didn't work. The upshot was that the couple were urged to send a *third* set of forms which would be treated as a priority.

Luckily for the Farrells, Pontypridd police came to the rescue when the nurses went to the station to try to get clearance that way. Inspector Knacker was able to oblige, raising the question again of why sensitive criminal records were ever handed to Crapita, along with millions of pounds, in the first place.

FOLLOW-UP... FOLLOW-UP...

■ **BLANTYRE HOUSE:** The saga of the prison service's botched raid on Blantyre House, one of the best-performing jails in Britain, has reached the high court. Ioin McLellan-Murray, the jail governor subsequently removed from his job, is seeking to quash the home office report into his complaints about his treatment before and after the raid.

He alleges that the investigation – which was supposed to look at his complaints of bullying by Tom Murtagh, the prison service area manager who ordered the raid, and at the failure of the prison service in its duty of care towards him – was biased, superficial, fatally flawed and a breach of natural justice.

The supposedly "independent" investigation was initially conducted by Clare Pelham, the prison service's director of corporate affairs who was directly answerable to its boss, Martin Narey, the man ultimately responsible for what happened to McLellan-Murray. Only *after* she was appointed was it realised she needed training to conduct investigations. She was joined by Deborah Loudon, director of personnel at the home office, who later took over the inquiry. Loudon sat alongside Narey on the home office management committee.

McLellan-Murray's reputation as a respected governor was restored by a Commons home affairs select committee inquiry which was scathing of the raid and search of the jail in which "there were no significant finds". But it may still take a court order for the prison service to acknowledge it treated the governor dismally.

PFI? PAC IT IN

ANYONE who still has faith in the government's stampede to sign private finance initiative (PFI) contracts with big business should read the report from the Commons public accounts committee (PAC) delicately entitled *Managing The Relationship To Secure a Successful Partnership in PFI Projects.*

It exposes a fantastic record of incompetence and carelessness in PFI; and discloses that there are 400 PFI projects in progress committing the government (ie taxpayers) to a total expenditure of £100bn.

Despite these massive figures the evidence – most of it culled from a not very thorough investigation by the national audit office (NAO) – suggests that one in five authorities considers that the "value for money" of its PFI contract has already diminished; and most PFI contracts have been running less than for five years.

The committee regards it as "essential" that proper checks be made to keep track of value for money. But only half the contracts surveyed by the NAO had any mechanism in place for ensuring value for money over the lifetime of the contract. Worse, 58 percent of the authorities had made deductions from payments due to PFI contractors, which suggests, as the report concludes, that "many authorities are not getting the service they require".

Yet in some PFI scandals, notably the case of the Royal Armouries Museum in Leeds, and the Channel tunnel link, the private contractor had to be bailed out by taxpayers in the most expensive and extravagant fashion. "We have seen," the report observes, "no rigorous assessment or value for money on PFI contracts in force or empirical evidence as to whether they are good value for money or not".

Naturally the MPs were anxious to improve this situation and made a number of recommendations, most of them about toughening up procedures. The government body responsible for these improvements is the Office for Government Commerce (OGC), whose chairman Peter Gershon and head of PFI policy Peter Ryan gave evidence to the committee last December. They were flanked by Colin Busby of the Major Contractors Group.

Mr Busby told the committee that his company, Kier, has at least £50m tied up in PFI projects and most of the answers from him and the OGC executives sounded as if they were concerned above all else to exculpate the contractors of any blame.

For instance, Alan Williams MP asked Mr Gershon: "We have £100bn already committed and you do not even have any meaningful information to give to this committee on rates of return for contractors." Mr Williams cited Fazakerley prison where the contractors asked for a "somewhat obscene" 50 percent premium "on top of what they would normally expect with a conventional building contract". Mr Gershon explained that Fazakerley was "a very early prison in a very novel market where for the private sector there would have been a very significant risk. As the market matures, the risk declines".

Explaining the problem more subtly, Gershon told the MPs: "Partnership is a bit like marriage. You enter into it with the view of having a long-term relationship, and sometimes, regretfully, you discover after the marriage ceremony that the person you thought you had married does not quite turn out to be as you expected. They have bad habits that only come to light after the wedding ceremony."

Mr Gershon became chief executive of the Office of Government Commerce in April 2000. His appointment crowned a 30-year career in industry, chiefly the arms industry. He was managing director of GEC's defence business until it was transferred to British Aerospace in 1999, when he joined the BAe board. As he moved across to government to supervise the billions of pounds of taxpayers' money pitched into PFI projects, Mr Gershon was awarded the CBE.

ETHICAL FOREIGN POLICY

ALL OVER BAR THE SHOOTING

WHEN in 1996 Labour was in opposition, the late MP Derek Fatchett harassed the Tories over their relations with Bahrain, a repressive regime known for its human rights abuses.

Fatchett did so because the emirate, dominated by a clique of former British army officers like security chief Dennis Henderson, had little enthusiasm for democracy but a big appetite for British-made weapons. However, when Fatchett went on to become a foreign office minister in a "new" Labour administration with an ethical foreign policy, he suddenly had to start defending his own government's continued closeness to the Bahraini royal family.

Asked about this apparent contradiction in 1997 by Labour MP George Galloway, Fatchett said Galloway was "right to point out that on a number of occasions, both in written and oral questions, I have raised my concerns about the human rights regime in Bahrain. I did that in opposition and it is natural and important that what we have said in opposition should colour and shape our policies in government. Let me therefore give the first commitment to my hon friend: there will be continuity in terms of the values and approach that we adopt."

Fatchett told Galloway there would be "a moral dimension to foreign policy" in relation to Bahrain. But by 1999, the year of his death, Fatchett was admitting to Dennis Canavan that Labour had "no plans" to "introduce an embargo on the export of arms to Bahrain".

Two announcements last month show to what extent "new" Labour's ethical foreign policy really influence its relations with Bahrain.

First, defence minister Lord Bach was "delighted" that "the King of Bahrain, His Majesty Shaikh Hamed bin Isa Al Khalifa" was buying Hawk Jets from BAE Systems, Labour's favourite arms firm. According to Bach, the RAF would "work closely together" with the sheikh's air force.

Second, Labour's latest arms exports report reveals that sales to Bahrain have increased from £3m to £4.5m. They include such ethical kit as assault rifle and submachine gun parts, general purpose machine guns, silencers, semi-automatic pistols, small arms ammo, weapon sights and toxic chemical precursors.

HOW to make sense of the latest report on British arms sales to Colombia, still criticised for its right-wing death squads and the killing of trades unionists and peasants by paramilitaries backed by the Colombian army?

According to the UK government's latest arms exports report, military sales to Colombia have fallen from £2m to "less than £250,000", suggesting that the foreign office has heeded criticism of weapons sales to the Colombian army.

But all is not as it seems. Though foreign secretary Jack Straw claims his report makes Britain "one of the most transparent of arms exporting states", the report in fact only gives a cash figure for *some* exports.

It does not include, for example, the value of "open" export licences which allow arms makers to sell unlimited numbers of their products. While the figure for weapons exports to Colombia may have shrunk, the number of "open" export licences has actually *increased* from five to 15, so Britain can sell more weapons to the Colombian army while admitting to smaller sales!

"Open" licences cover friendly stuff like military transport aircraft parts and aero-engines, large calibre artillery equipment and artillery computers, toxic chemical precursors and military communications equipment.

You can contact Paul Foot on 020 7287 3183 or the In the Back team on 020 7437 4017

In the City

ONE of the many alarming facts to emerge from the Enron collapse was that the Houston energy trader used Andersen to carry out both its external and internal audits. This meant Andersen accountants were only ever checking other Andersen accountants' numbers and policies. Such avoidance of any independent oversight has been cited by Senate investigators as part of Enron's non-existent corporate governance and evidence of the passive role played by its audit committee which included Lord Wakeham.

The senate's permanent sub-committee on investigations said Wakeham and his colleagues allowed Enron "to engage in high-risk accounting, inappropriate conflict of interest transactions, extensive undisclosed off-the-books activities and excessive executive compensation". Facing potentially ruinous lawsuits, they have blamed Andersen and Enron's lawyers Vinson & Elkins.

On the face of it the very concept of Andersen's *work being* checked by other Andersen employees seems bizarre. But it is not as rare as might be imagined – even in Britain.

One company which allowed Andersen to combine both internal and external audit functions is none other than Northern Foods, the group built up by Labour peer Lord Haskins.

Until taken over by Deloitte & Touche, Andersen had been the Northern Foods auditor for some years. Northern Foods was not a big client. For the last two years the external audit fee was just £300,000 a year. But Andersen was paid another £400,000 pa each time for other services. All but £100,000 of this was paid for internal auditing.

Andersen won the five-year internal audit contract in 1998 after a competitive tender. This presumes it was the best buy. But it is hard to see that Andersen would have wanted that contract to get away given the extra work that might have to be done if the internal audit was carried out by another set of bean counters whose numbers Andersen would have had to check as part of the external audit. How much easier to be able to rely on your own colleagues. Especially when auditing is seen by most big accountancy firms as a loss leader.

Post-Enron, Northern Foods shareholders are now suddenly awash with information about this dubious arrangement which was strangely considered unnecessary in the two previous annual reports. There was no mention there of the fact that Andersen carried out both functions. The previous accounts do, however, reveal that since obtaining that internal audit contract Andersen has been paid at least £600,000 on top of the audit fee.

A number of other British firms outsource their internal audit work to their auditors. Others merely outsource IT work. But in the post-Enron climate it would seem just as wise to split the internal and external audit as it is now seen to split the audit and consultancy, or to rotate the auditors.

Having the same firm perform both functions smacks of the possibly corrupting cosiness and fees-for-the-boys syndrome which has been at the root of all company scandals since the 60s when Maxwell's auditors at Pergamon signed the accounts despite warnings from their staff because the Fat Man was too big a client to lose.

Lord Haskins' boardroom colleagues at Northern Foods go to great lengths to reassure shareholders that they are not asleep at the audit wheel and have the Andersen relationship under review. Perhaps next year, when the internal audit contract ends, that review should see the appointment of an alternative to no doubt the same ex-Andersen people sailing under the flag of Deloitte & Touche doing both jobs.

"I strongly advise a biscuit tin under your bed"

Meanwhile it seems it may not be long before the Serious Farce Office may have a piece of the expected Enron prosecutions. So far there have just been preliminary contacts between the US prosecutors and the SFO, as well as the Financial Services Authority. However, a request to assist is expected before too long.

The starting point is likely to be the expected extradition request for the three former Greenwich NatWest bankers who were accused in June of cheating their employer by secretly investing in an Enron partnership. Gary Mulgrew, Giles Darby and David Bermingham are accused of making $7m from the investment after persuading Greenwich NatWest to sell its stake for $1m.

NatWest established Campsie which invested $7.5m in the LJM Cayman partnership controlled by Enron's chief financial officer Andrew Fastow. LJM was one of the main off-the-books vehicles used to hide Enron debt. The three bankers are said to have persuaded NatWest to sell its stake in an LJM subsidiary called Swap Sub for $1m to Fastow. He then sold the stake to the trio for $250,000 before buying it back for $7.3m. Greenwich NatWest in Houston engaged in multi-million deals with Enron providing finance for Fastow's special purpose vehicles.

Fastow is a key target of the Houston prosecutors. The strike at the three British investment bankers has all the signs of a bid to roll them up as cooperating witnesses against their former benefactor in return for a guilty plea and a soft sentence. The ultimate game plan could be to persuade Fastow to turn on his bosses Jeffrey Skilling and President Bush's old pal Ken Lay in return for a shorter sentence. But first is likely to come the SFO raids and Section 2 questioning followed by possible extradition proceedings.

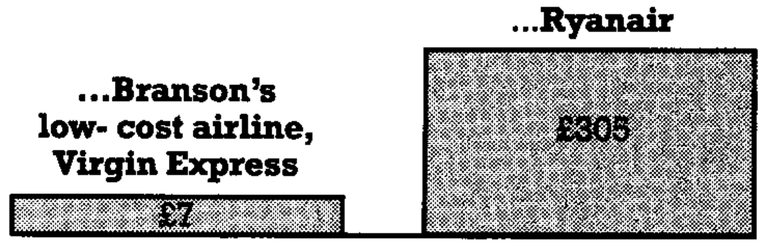
Answers may also have to be obtained, along with documents, from those banks like Barclays which played significant roles in the Enron partnerships such as Chewco, operated by Fastow; not to mention the (loans disguised as energy trades) circular Mahonia transactions done through Jersey with Citibank and J.P.Morgan Chase.

After the recent arrests in the Adelphia and WorldCom cases, it is clear that with elections looming in November Bush wants to "get the handcuffs on" men in suits. So some high profile Enron arrests may not be far away.

Stock Horror

Another Richard Branson success

Value of £100 invested four years ago in...



THE Belgian beer giant Interbrew's decision to back away from putting editors in prison or seizing newspaper assets in its potentially fruitless campaign to find the source of the fabricated document suggesting a phoney bid for South African Breweries may not be entirely surprising. There are rumours that a prime suspect for the leak is within the Paris branch of Interbrew's long-time merchant banker, Lazards.

The motive for the leak is said to be part of a split between the Interbrew chief executive Hugh Powell and some elements of the Belgian founding families who still control the Stella Artois brewing giant. Stories in the British press about an imminent SAB bid ensured it did not happen which is what some of the Belgians wanted – at least that is how the theory goes.

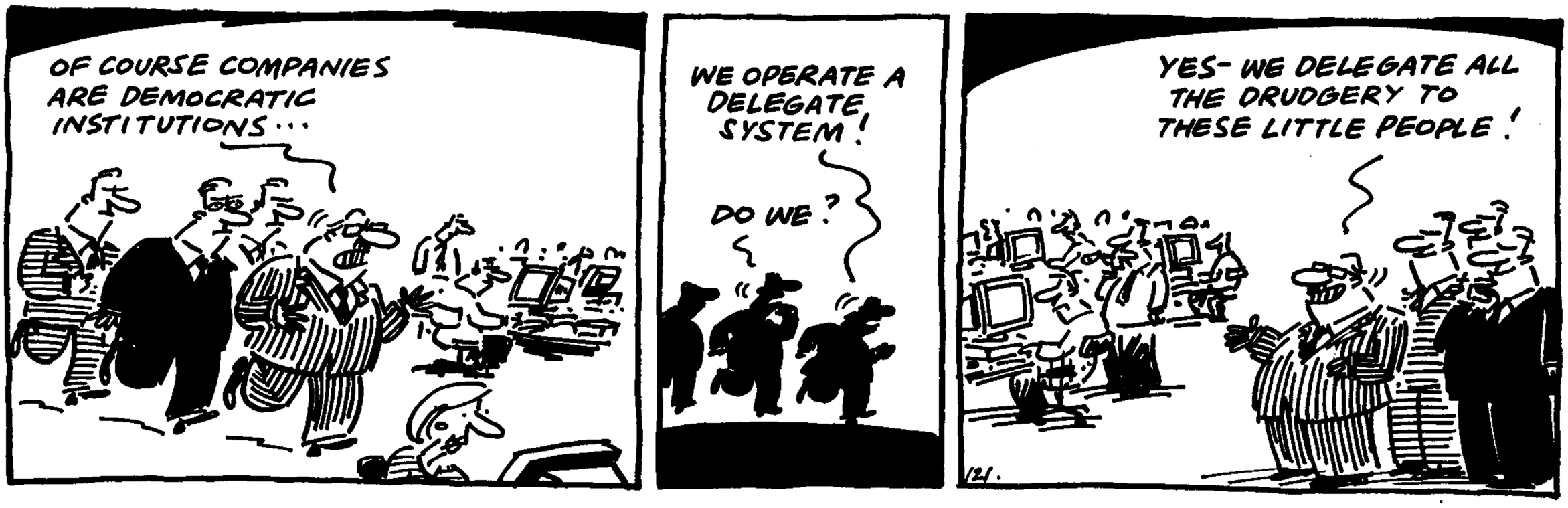
Interestingly the 40-page report, prepared by Lazards and Goldman Sachs, doctored to suggest a bid for SAB was under discussion, came to the newspapers from Belgium. Any proof of such a Lazards link or to the family shareholders would be highly embarrassing for Interbrew.

But now they have turned the whole mole hunt over to the FSA which is never short of

Slicker continues overleaf ➔

THE DIRECTORS

DREDGE/RIGG


OF COURSE COMPANIES ARE DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS...
WE OPERATE A DELEGATE SYSTEM!
DO WE?
YES- WE DELEGATE ALL THE DRUDGERY TO THESE LITTLE PEOPLE!

In the City (cont.)

enthusiasm for throwing its regulatory weight about even if so far its achievements as a super-regulator have been far from stellar. But even if the FSA wants to bully the *Financial Times*, *Times* and the *Guardian* – more staunch than the *Independent* or Reuters – it is by no means certain they will buckle and, any way, there is little likelihood that handing over the document will reveal the source. That's why so few Whitehall leak inquiries ever find the leaker.

But that may not be enough to stop FSA chief Sir Howard Davies, a man imbued with his own sense of importance and achievement despite Equitable Life, from trying.

YET another raft of victims of the high-yield investment scam will be revealed later this month with the sentencing of former insurance salesman Graham Hammond, whose FCS Fund Management operated from offices in Hong Kong and Dubai although Hammond was in Norfolk.

Hammond has pleaded guilty to charges brought by the SFO involving £1.5m invested with his Waidberg Currency Fund, but investigators believe the amount involved could be at least £10m and possibly as much as £30m.

RENEWED publicity over the computer failings and other inadequacies in the European Commission's ability to police the EU budget have produced the usual response from the Welsh Windbag, aka commission vice-president Neil Kinnock that everything is under control. No doubt he would say the same about the EU's anti-fraud unit OLAF, where for more than a year the commission has patiently waited for its appointed director of investigations and operations to arrive.

The appointment of Italian investigating magistrate Alberto Perducca in April 2001 has been blocked ever since by prime minister Silvio Berlusconi, who has very good reason to hate magistrates. They are constantly investigating Tony's great pal for fraud.

Berlusconi insists that Turin prosecutor Perducca needs his permission to leave or must resign as a magistrate and claims the appointment was not transparent – a charge denied by OLAF. Perducca is one of three magistrates selected by OLAF and backed by the previous Italian government.

This is a curious claim to make about the commission which is run by an Italian, Romano Prodi, and dominated by national nepotistic fiefdoms in many departments, with the Italians prime beneficiaries.

The two other magistrates who were awarded temporary positions were threatened with the loss of pension rights and the right of return to their former positions after OLAF. Berlusconi's attitude is seen as harsh in an Italian civil service where two jobs – one real, one of the jacket on the chair variety – are not unknown.

But instead of forcing Perducca to choose or selecting an alternative candidate who could take up the post immediately and get on with the job, OLAF kept pressing Berlusconi to let his people go. Curiously Perducca was passed over in 1999 for the job of OLAF's top cop. That post instead went to German Franz-Herman Bruner, who personally chose Perducca.

One Italian magistrate has defied the government and has arrived in Brussels. He is now facing disciplinary proceedings in Italy. The other decided to return to Italy. Now it is said that Perducca will finally arrive later this month to take up his post and no doubt also face disciplinary action.

In the meantime the role of top investigator has been carried out by an acting Eurocrat. A common phenomenon inside OLAF / UCLAF/ WE-ALL-LAF. The current organisational chart shows no less than 10 senior posts held by acting officials rather than permanent appointments.

The approach taken towards the Perducca affair, even if it is now resolved, is far from satisfactory and shows once again just how seriously Kinnock and his colleagues take fraud.

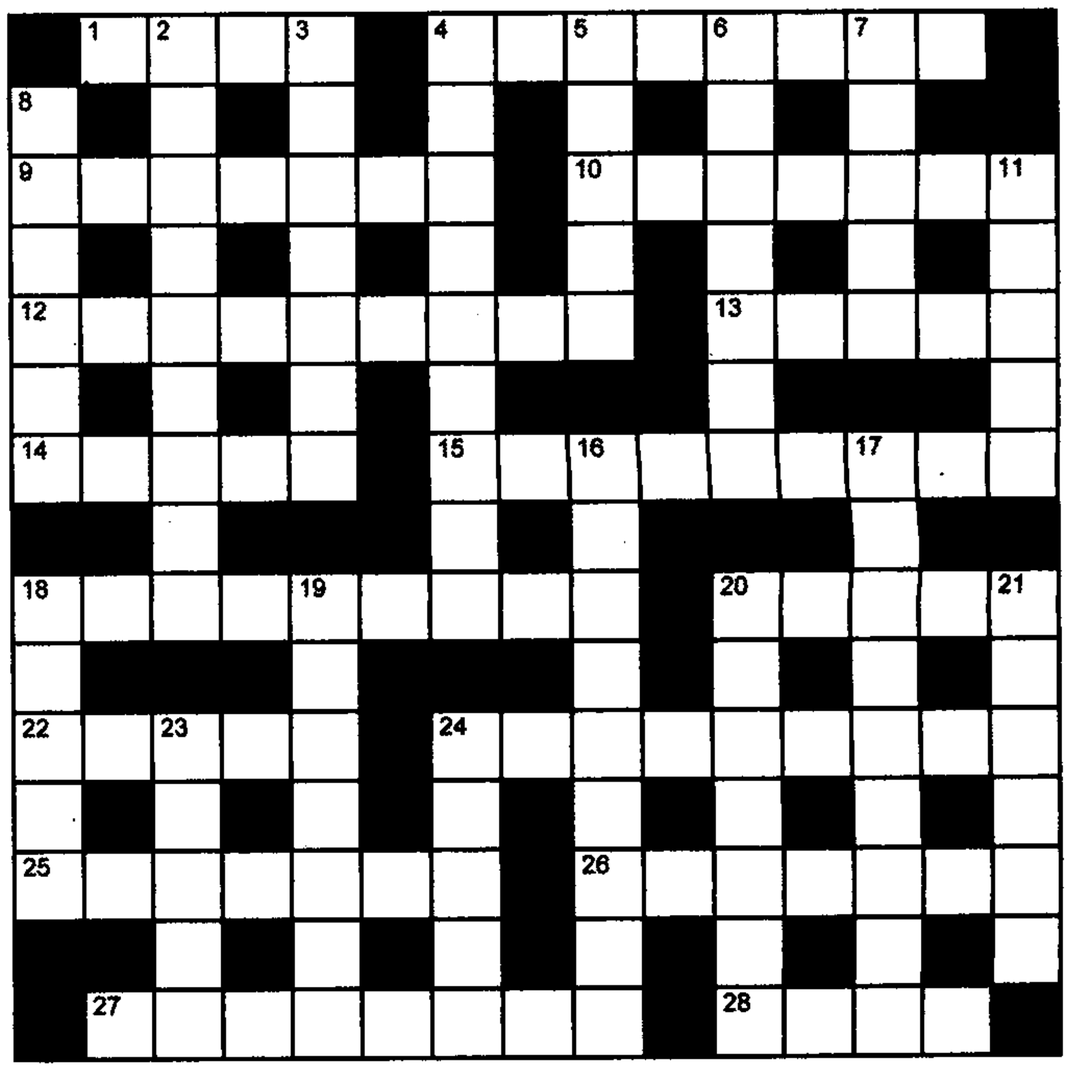
'Slicker'

EYE CROSSWORD 215

by Cyclops

£100 prize to first correct solution opened on 16 August 2002.

Entries to 'Crossword', Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1D 3BN or via email to crossword@private-eye.co.uk



ACROSS

1/4ac. Bog awful rep brought before Walter, the high profile ex-union member (4,8)
9 Duke lost without said "eff you" money-grabber's hoard of dollars? (7)
10/24dn. Doing Comic Relief in support of computing, etc. though in desperate need of relief oneself? (7,3,2)
12 Giving head, bares bust — given a right talking to (3-6)
13 Darling, it could be the definitive Northern massive erection (5)
14 He thought a lot of male lubricant (5)
15 Removed clothing forcefully and 'did' someone? (6,3)
18 State if Tone's broken promises to voters (9)
20 Enjoy sport with member — but don't overdo it (5)
22 Dutch produce crack loyalists (5)
24 Sizeable fortune? Not bloody likely! (3,6)
25 Pock-mark on singing star's 'jug' (7)
26 Dick coyly shows America has green environment (7)
27 Exit (holding tip of plonker and balls) top (8)
28 Friends making tackle hard (4)

DOWN

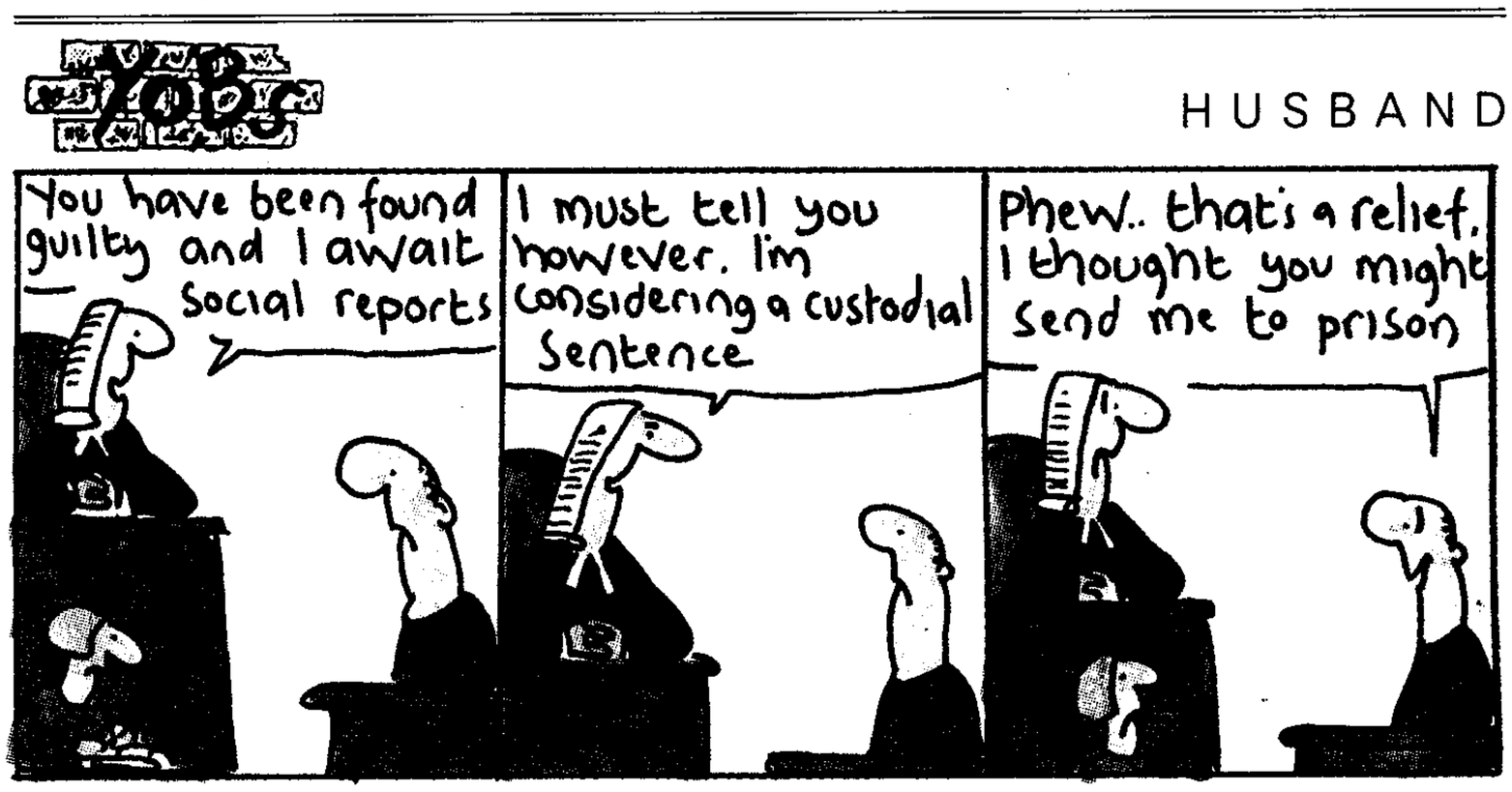
2 "Love to mount gent with sore dicky" – sexual development controller (9)
3 Not a thing to stick up groupie on trip (4,3)
4 Sexually aroused during clips about sea food (9)
5 Provoked, as 1/4 ac. was by a protestor (5)
6 Firm biter takes end off someone of the same family (7)
7 Obsession, cutting end off cute penis? (5)
8 Short continental she screwed once more (6)
11 A key indication that *George* went in for cleavage, not model *(1-4)*
16 Shit recipe sample — lack of appreciation of social niceties (4,5)
17 Some dish's exciting nipple-head rotation (5,4)
18 Study pot over London direction (3,2)
19 He outed member publicly as tacky queen (7)
20 School gets dirt on objectionable type (7)
21 Strip-artist who performs with a banana? (6)
23 Representing the extreme in cult racism (5)
24 See 10 ac.

Crossword 214 winner: MICHAEL CRAPPER

Solution to Crossword 214

ACROSS: 8 In arrears 10 Input 11 Jeeze 12 First slip 13 Blabbed 15 Ear-flap 17 Anal-retentive 21 Hits out 22 Uddered 23 Smack-head 25 Golly 26 Hymen 27 Eye strain.

DOWN: 1 Big jobs 2 Babe-magnet 3 Arse 4 Barfed 5 Micturated 6 Opal 7 Step-ups 9 Screeve 14 Bollocking 16 Lovers Leap 18 Extreme 19 Who's Who 20 Eddying 22 Undies 24 Ammo 25 Guts.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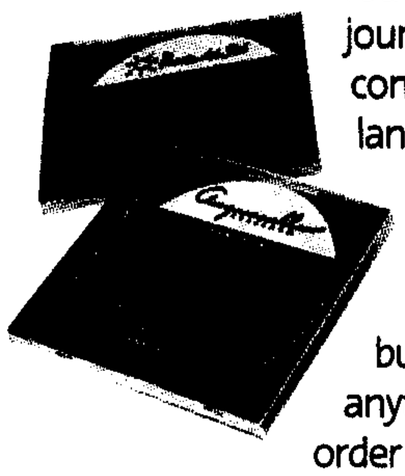

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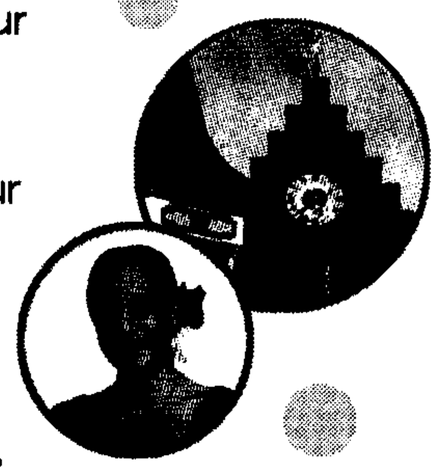

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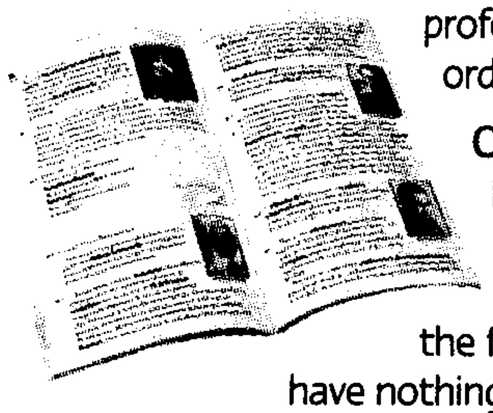

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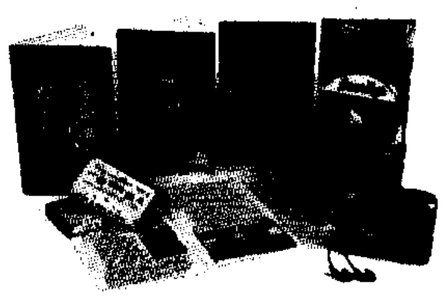

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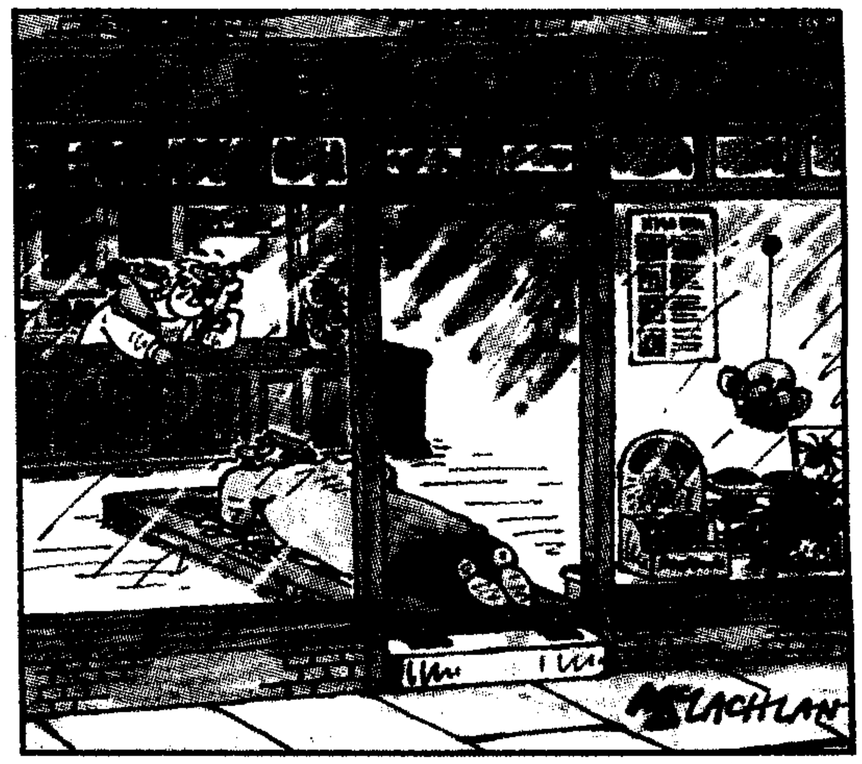

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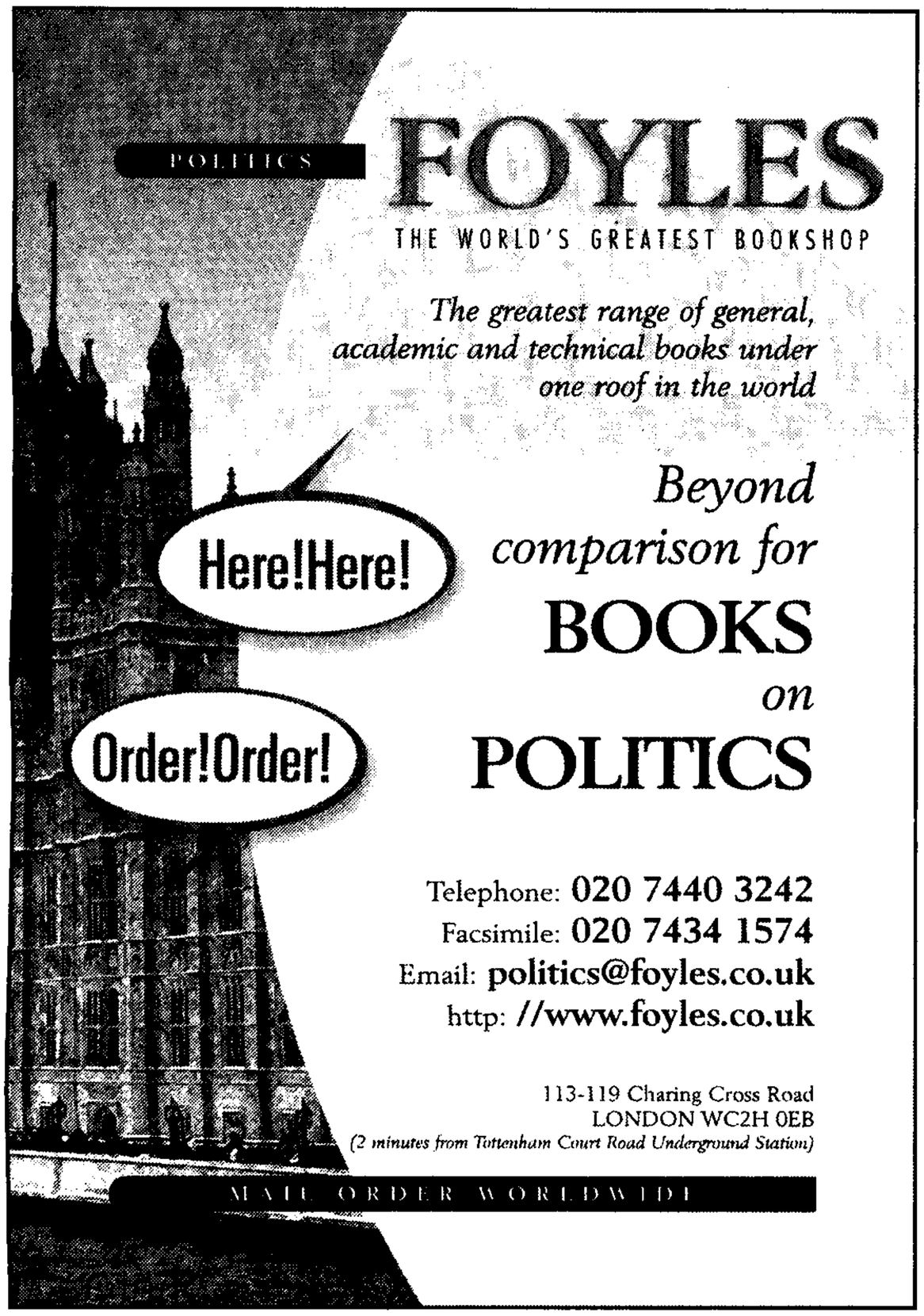

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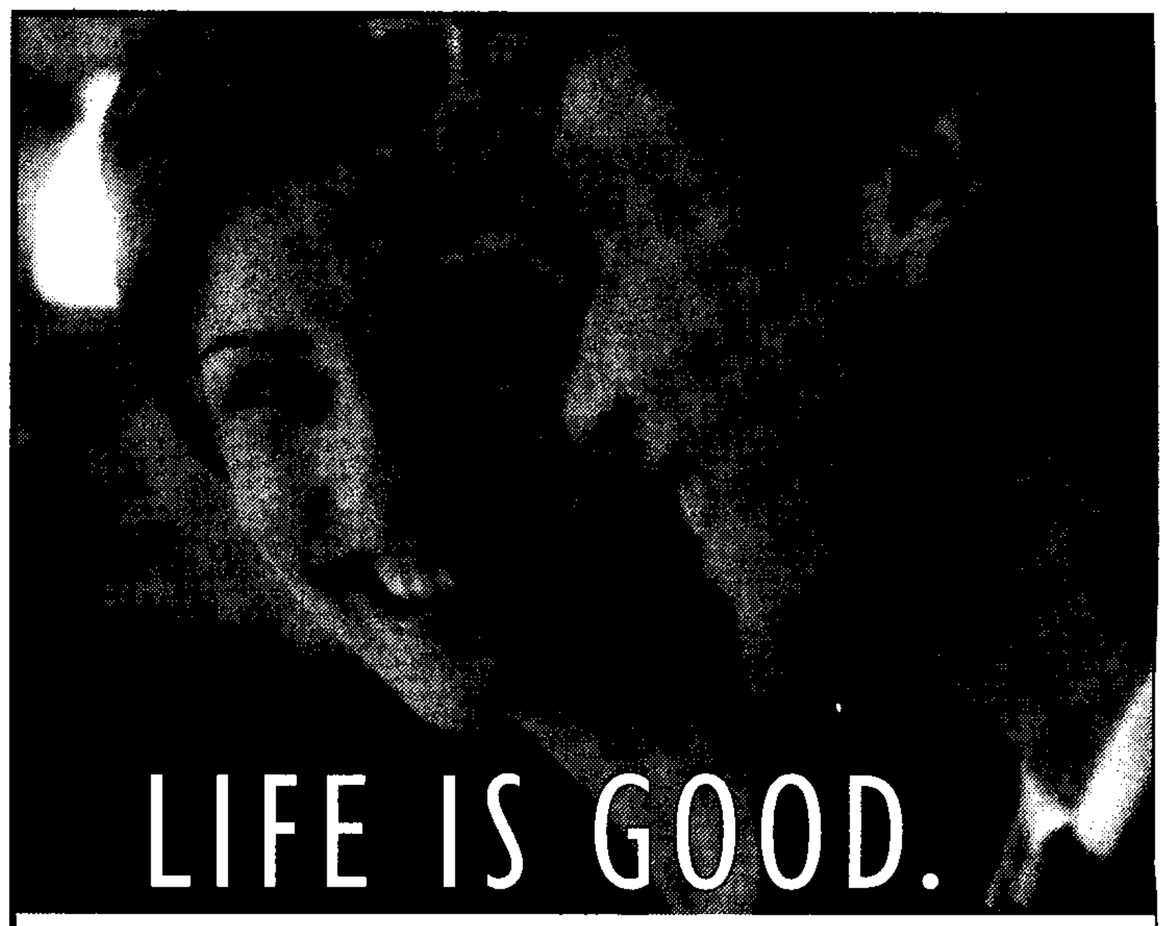

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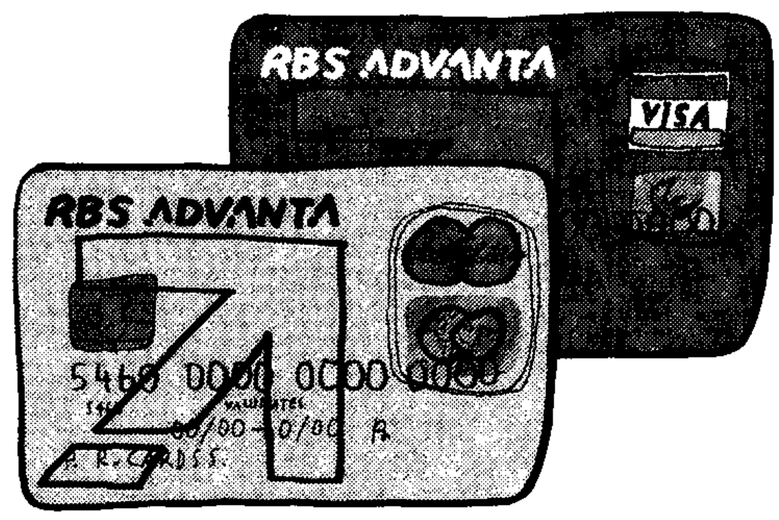

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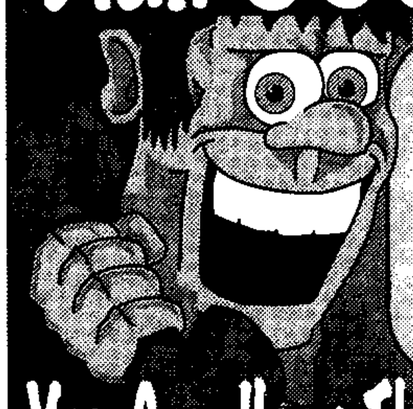

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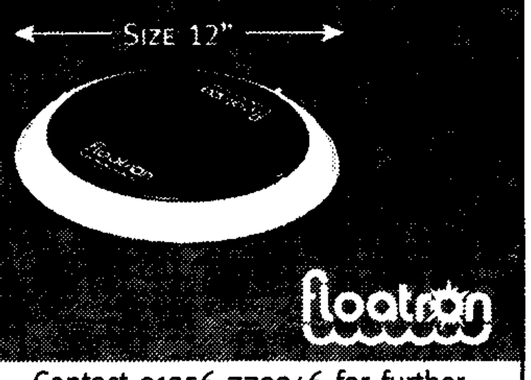

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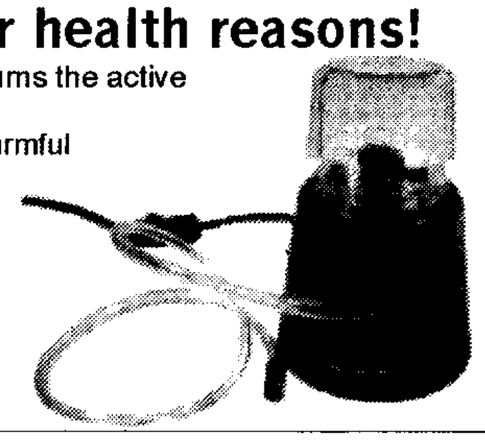

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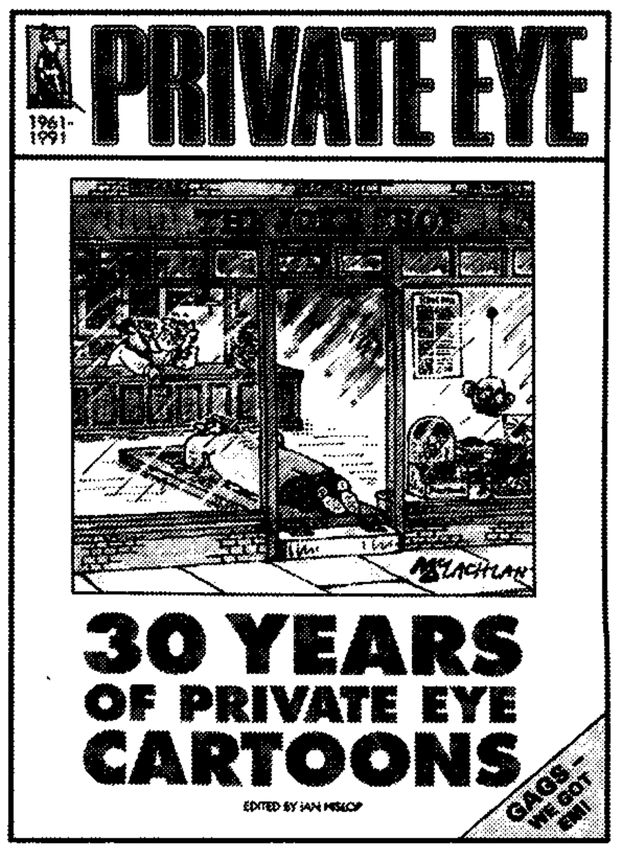

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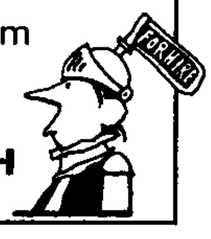

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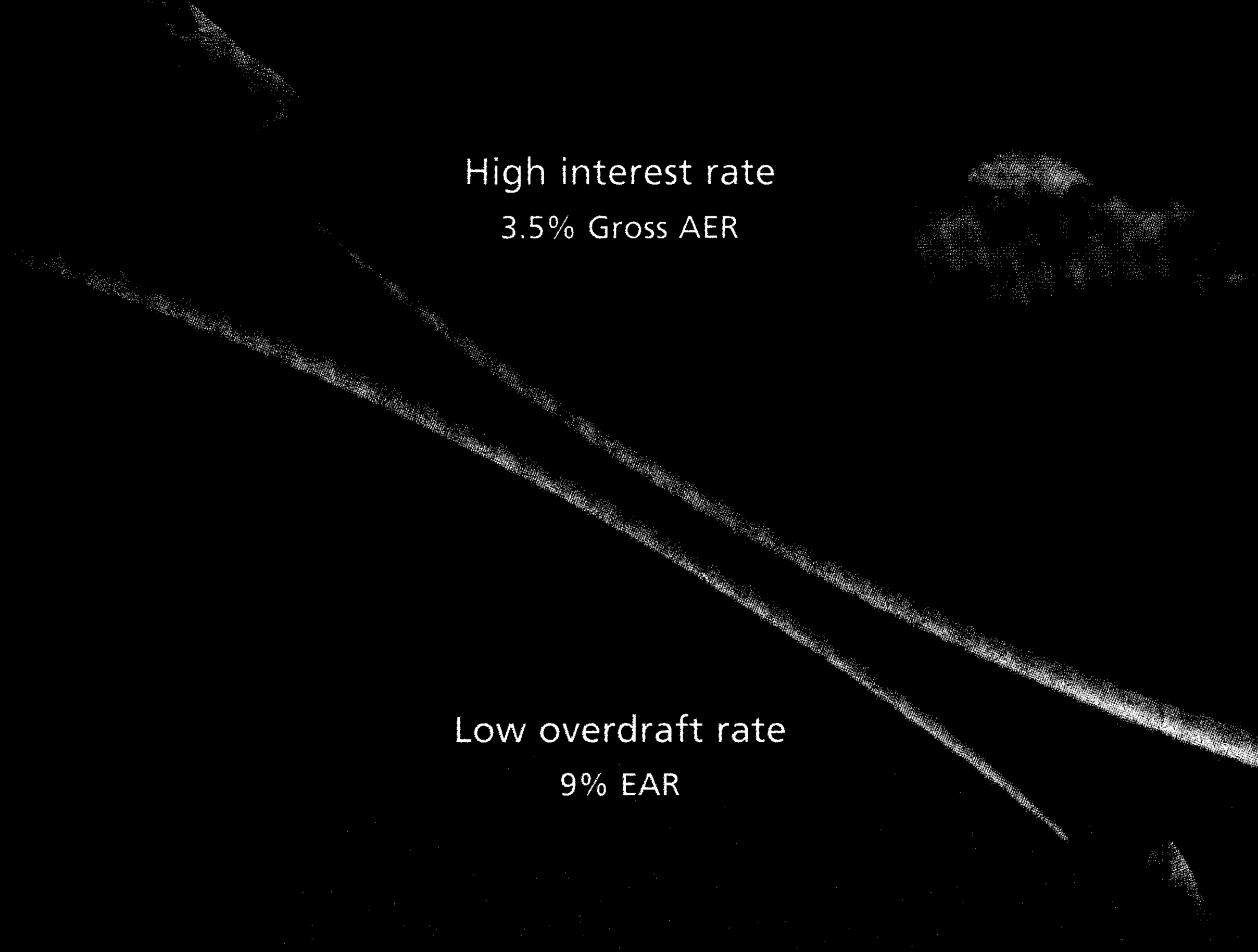

High interest rate

3.5% Gross AER

Low overdraft rate

9% EAR

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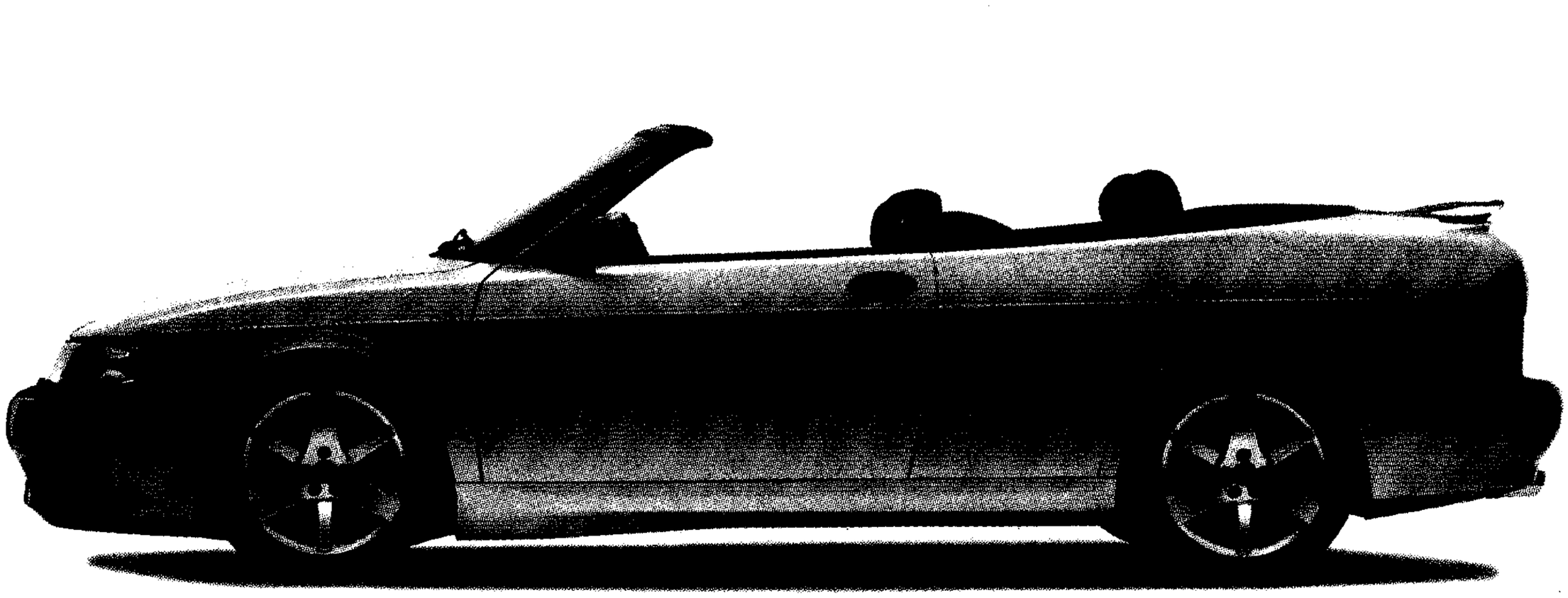

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